PROPHETS OF THE NEW INDIA

ROMAIN ROLLAND

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PROPHETS OF THE NEW INDIA

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

E. F. MALCOLM-SMITH

(Late Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge)

ROMAIN ROLLAND

PROPHETS OF THE NEW INDIA

ALBERT & CHARLES BONI 1930 NEW YORK

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE translation of this work by Romain Rolland was undertaken in the first instance for the Indian Edition, which is being published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas for circulation in India, Ceylon and the Federated Malay States. The present Edition is substantially the same as the Indian Edition so far as the text is concerned, but it contains additional notes for the greater enlightenment of Western readers.

The Translator desires to express her sense of the impossibility of doing justice to the exquisite style of the Author's French. At the Author's request she has, therefore, sought to give as literal a translation of his thought as possible, and style has been a secondary consideration. The bulk of the text has been submitted to the Author's sister, to whom the work is dedicated, and to Swami Ashokananda, the Indian Editor, for purposes of correction before being cast in its final form. The Translator desires to express publicly her deep sense of obligation to those two helpers for their unfailing and unwearied assistance.

Too little is known of Indian thought in the West. May others share the experience of the Translator, and discover through these pages that the great thinkers of the earth are essentially brothers. Conditions may differ widely at the foot or up the slopes of the mountains, but above are "the shining tablelands, to which our God Himself is moon and sun." From those pure heights the divisions that part mankind are no longer discernible.

E. F. M.-S.

Ahmedabad,
India,
February, 1930.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In writing these two books I have had constant recourse to the advice of the Ramakrishna Mission, which has been kind enough to place all the requisite documents at my disposal. In particular I owe a great deal to the present venerable head of the Belur Math and Superior of the Order, Swami Shivananda, who has been good enough to give me his precious personal memories of the Master; to his pious direct disciple and Evangelist, Mahendra Nath Gupta, whose name is modestly concealed behind the simple initial M; to the young and religious savant, Boshi Sen, a disciple of Sir J. C. Bose and a devotee of Vivekananda, who with her permission communicated to me the unpublished Memoirs of Sister Christine, she who with Sister Nivedita was the most intimate of Vivekananda's Western disciples; to Miss Josephine MacLeod, who was an active and devoted friend of the great Swami; above all to the editor of the Review, Prabuddha Bharata, Swami Ashokananda, who has never wearied of my unwearied questions, but has answered them with the most precise erudition. It was he who gave me the most complete information with regard to the actual position of the Ramakrishna Mission.

I must also express my gratitude to Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, who first revealed Ramakrishna's existence to me, and to my faithful friend, Dr. Kalidas Nag, who has more than once advised and instructed me.

May I have made the best use of so many excellent guides for the service of the India which is dear to us and of the human Spirit!

R. R.

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

PAGE

Translator's Note v

Author's Preface vii

To My Eastern Readers xi

To My Western Readers xv

Prelude xxix

CHAPTER

I. The Gospel of Childhood 3

II. Kali the Mother 10

III. The Two Guides to Knowledge; The Bharavi Brahami and Totapuri 24

IV. Identity With the Absolute 44

V. The Return to Man 59

VI. The Builders of Unity 76

VII. Ramakrishna and the King-Shepherds of India 132

VIII. The Call of the Disciples 157

IX. The Master and His Children 172

X. Naren, The Beloved Disciple 205

XI. The Swan Song 234

XII. The River Re-enters the Sea 244

Epilogue 263

Bibliography 270

Iconography 276

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BOOK TWO

PART I

THE LIFE OF VIVEKANANDA

PAGE

PRELUDE 283

CHAPTER

I. THE PARIVRAJAKA: THE CALL OF THE EARTH TO THE WANDERING SOUL . . . 291
II. THE PILGRIM OF INDIA 304
III. THE GREAT JOURNEY TO THE WEST AND THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS 316
IV. AMERICA AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST JOURNEY OF VIVEKANANDA. THE ANGLO-SAXONS, FORERUNNERS OF THE SPIRIT OF ASIA; EMERSON, THOREAU, WALT WHITMAN 329
V. THE PREACHING IN AMERICA 351
VI. THE MEETING OF INDIA AND EUROPE . . 367
VII. THE RETURN TO INDIA 386
VIII. THE FOUNDING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION 399
IX. THE SECOND JOURNEY TO THE WEST . . 431
X. THE DEPARTURE 440

PART II

THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL OF VIVEKANANDA

I. MAYA AND THE MARCH TO FREEDOM . . 457
II. THE GREAT PATHS (THE YOGAS) . . . 470
  1. Karma-Yoga 476

CHAPTER PAGE
2. Bhakti-Yoga 489
3. Raja-Yoga 502
4. Jnana-Yoga 518
III. SCIENCE, THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION . . . 542
IV. CIVITAS DEI: THE CITY OF MAN 567
V. CAVE CANEM! 582
CONCLUSION 597

PART III

I. THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION . 605
II. THE AWAKENING OF INDIA AFTER VIVEKANANDA, RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND AUROBINDO GHOSE 620

APPENDICES:

NOTE I. CONCERNING MYSTIC INTROVERSION AND ITS SCIENTIFIC VALUE FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL 633
NOTE II. CONCERNING HELLENIC-CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM OF THE FIRST CENTURIES, AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HINDU MYSTICISM: PLOTINUS OF ALEXANDRIA AND DENIS THE AREOPAGITE 647

TO MY EASTERN READERS[1]

"Greeting to the feet of the Jnanin! Greeting to the feet of the Bhakta! Greeting to the devout who believe in the formless God! Greeting to those who believe in a God with form! Greeting to the men of old who knew Brahman! Greeting to the modern knowers of Truth. . . ."
(Ramakrishna, October 28, 1882.)

I MUST beg my Indian readers to view with indulgence the mistakes I may have made. In spite of all the enthusiasm I have brought to my task, it is impossible for a man of the West to interpret men of Asia with their thousand years' experience of thought; for such an interpretation must often be erroneous. The only thing to which I can testify is the sincerity which has led me to make a pious attempt to enter into all forms of life.

At the same time I must confess that I have not abdicated one iota of my free judgment as a man of the West. I respect the faith of all and very often I love it. But I never subscribe to it. Ramakrishna lies very near to my heart because I see in him a man and not an "Incarnation," as he appears to his disciples. In accordance with the Vedantists I do not need to enclose God within the bounds of a privileged man in order to admit that the Divine dwells within the soul and that the soul dwells in everything—that Atman is Braham: although it knows it not; that view is a form of nationalism of spirit and I cannot accept it. I see God in all that exists. I see Him as completely in the least fragment as in the whole Cosmos. There is no difference of essence. And power is universally infinite; that which lies hidden in an atom, if one only knew it, could blow up a whole world. The only difference is that it is more or less concentrated in the heart of a conscience, in an ego, or in a unit of energy, an ion. The very greatest of men is only a clearer reflection of the Sun which gleams in each drop of dew.

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[1] This book is to appear in India and Europe at the same time.

That is why I can never make that sacred gulf so pleasing to the devout, between the heroes of the soul and the thousands of their obscure companions past and present. And neither more nor less than I isolate Christ and Buddha, do I isolate Ramakrishna and Vivekananda from the great army of the Spirit marching on in their own time. I shall try in the course of this book to do justice to those personalities of genius, who during the last century have sprung up in reawakened India, reviving the ancient energies of their country and bringing about a springtime of thought within her borders. The work of each one was creative and each one collected round him a band of faithful souls who formed themselves into a church and unconsciously looked upon that church as a temple of the one or of the greatest God.

At this distance from their differences I refuse to see the dust of battle; at this distance the hedges between the fields melt into an immense expanse. I can only see the same river, a majestic *"chemin qui marche"* (road which marches) in the words of our Pascal. And it is because Ramakrishna more fully than any other man not only conceived, but realized in himself the total Unity of this river of God, open to all rivers and all streams, that I have given him my love; and I have drawn a little of his sacred water to slake the great thirst of the world.

But I shall not remain leaning at the edge of the river. I shall continue my march with the stream right to the sea. Leaving behind at each winding of the river where death has cried "Halt!" to one of our leaders the kneeling company of the faithful, I shall go with the stream and pay homage to it from the source to the estuary. Holy is the source, holy is the course, holy is the estuary. And we shall embrace within the river and its tributaries small and great and in the Ocean itself—the whole moving mass of the living God.

R. R.

TO MY WESTERN READERS

I have dedicated my whole life to the reconciliation of mankind. I have striven to bring it about among the peoples of Europe, especially between those two great Western peoples, who are brethren and yet enemies. For the last ten years I have been attempting the same task for the West and the East. I also desire to reconcile, if it is possible, the two antithetical forms of spirit for which the West and the East are wrongly supposed to stand—reason and faith—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, the diverse forms of reason and of faith; for the West and the East share them both almost equally although few suspect it.

In our days an absurd separation has been made between these two halves of the soul, and it is presumed that they are incompatible. The only incompatibility lies in the narrowness of view, which those who erroneously claim to be their representatives, share in common.

On the one hand, those who call themselves religious shut themselves up within the four walls of their chapel and not only refuse to come out (as they have a right to do) but they would deny to all outside those four walls the right to live, if they could. On the other hand, the freethinkers, who are for the most part without any religious sense at all (as they have a right to be) too often consider it their mission in life to fight against religious souls and in turn deny their right to exist. The result is the futile spectacle of a systematic attempt to destroy religion on the part of men who do not perceive that they are attacking something which they do not understand. A discussion of religion based solely on historical or pseudo-historical texts, rendered sterile by time and covered with lichen, is of no avail. As well explain the fact of inner psychological life by the dissection of the physical organs through which it flows. The confusion created by our rationalists between the outward expression and the power of thought seems to me as illusory as the confusion common to the religions of past ages of identifying magic powers with the words, the syllables or the letters whereby they are expressed.

The first qualification for knowing, judging, and if desirable condemning a religion or religions, is to have made experiments for oneself in the *fact* of religious consciousness. Even those who have followed a religious vocation are not all qualified to speak on the subject; for, if they are sincere, they will recognise that the fact of religious consciousness and the profession of religion are two different things. Many very honourable priests are believers by obedience or from interested or indolent motives, and have either never felt the need of religious experience or have shrunk from gaining it because they lack sufficient strength of character. As against these may be set many souls who are or who believe they are free from all religious belief, but who in reality live immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness, which they term—Socialism, Communism, Humanitarianism, Nationalism and even Rationalism. It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of the individual, at times higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious Soul.

On the other hand, thousands of cowardly believers, clerical and lay, within the churches have no right to wear the colours of religion. They do not believe because they choose to believe, but wallow in the stable where they were born in front of mangers full of the grain of comfortable beliefs upon which all they have to do is to ruminate.

The tragic words used of Christ—that He will be in agony to the end of the world[1]—are well known. I myself do not believe in one personal God, least of all in a God of Sorrow only. But I believe that in all that exists, including joy and sorrow and with them all forms of life, in mankind, and in men and in the Universe, the only God is He who is a perpetual birth. The Creation takes place anew every instant. Religion is never accomplished. It is a ceaseless action and the will to strive—the outpouring of a spring, never a stagnant pond.

I belong to a land of rivers. I love them as if they were living creatures, and I understand why my ancestors offered them oblations of wine and milk. Now of all rivers the most sacred is that which gushes out eternally from the depths of the soul, from its rocks and sands and glaciers. Therein lies primeval Force and that is what I call religion. Everything belongs to this river of the Soul, flowing from the dark unplumbed reservoir of our being down the inevitable slope to the Ocean of the conscious, realised and mastered Being. And just as the water condenses and rises in vapour from the sea to the clouds of the sky to fill again the reservoir of the rivers, the cycles of creation proceed in uninterrupted succession. From the source to the sea, from the sea to the source everything consists of the same Energy, of the Being without beginning and without end. It matters not to me whether the Being be called God (and which God?) or Force (and what Force? It may equally be called Matter, but what manner of matter is it when it includes the forces of the Spirit?) Words, words, nothing but words! Unity, living and not abstract, is the essence of it all. And it is that which I adore, and it is that which the great believers and the great agnostics, who carry it within them consciously or unconsciously, alike adore.

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[1] Pascal: *Pensées; Le mystère de Jésus;* "Jésus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde: il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là."

*

* *

To her, to the Great Goddess, the invisible, the immanent, who gathers in her golden arms the multiform, multicolored sheaf of polyphony—to Unity—I dedicate this new work.

ἐχ τῶν δὶαγερόντων χαλλίστην Ἁρμονίαν[2]

[2] "The most beautiful harmony, composed of discords." (Heraclitus of Ephesus.)

For a century in new India Unity has been the target for the arrows of all archers. Fiery personalities throughout this century have sprung from her sacred earth, a veritable Ganges of peoples and thought. Whatever may be the differences between them their goal is ever the same—human unity through God. And through all the changes of workmen Unity itself has expanded and gained in precision.

From first to last this great movement has been one of co-operation on a footing of complete equality between the West and the East, between the powers of reason and those—not of faith in the sense of blind acceptance, a sense it has gained in servile ages among exhausted races—but of vital and penetrating intuition: the eye in the forehead of the Cyclops which completes but does not cancel the other two.

From this magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later [3] I have chosen two men, who have won my regard because with incomparable charm and power they have realised this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven—*Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

The subject of this book is threefold and yet one. It comprises the story of two extraordinary lives—one half legendary, the other a veritable epic—unfolded before us in our own time, and the account of a lofty system of thought, at once religious and philosophic, moral and social, with its message for modern humanity from the depths of India's past.

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[3] See Chapter VI of this volume—the Builders of Unity. (Ram Mohun Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Chunder Sen, Dayananda.) Cf. also *India on the March* (*Revue Europe*, December 15, 1928), where I have found a place for our great contemporary, Aurobindo Ghose, of whom I shall speak again at the end of my second volume.

Although (as you will see for yourselves) the pathetic interest, the charming poetry, the grace and Homeric grandeur of these two lives are sufficient to explain why I have spent two years of my own in exploring and tracing their course in order to show them to you, it was not the curiosity of an explorer that prompted me to undertake the journey.

I am no dilettante and I do not bring to jaded readers the opportunity to lose themselves, but rather to find themselves—to find their true selves, naked and without the mask of falsehood. My companions have ever been men with just that object in view, whether living or dead, and the limits of centuries or of races mean little to me. There is neither East nor West for the naked soul; such things are merely its trappings. The whole world is its home. And as its home is each one of us, it belongs to all of us.

Perhaps I may be excused if I put myself for a brief space upon the stage in order to explain the source of inner thought that has given birth to this work. I do this only by way of example, for I am not an exceptional man. I am one of the people of France. I know that I represent thousands of Westerners, who have neither the means nor the time to express themselves. Whenever one of us speaks from the depths of his heart in order to free his own self, his voice liberates at the same time thousands of silent voices. Then listen, not to my voice, but to the echo of theirs.

I was born and spent the first fourteen years of my life in a part of central France, where my family had been established for centuries. Our line is purely French and Catholic without any foreign admixture.

And the early environment wherein I was sealed until my arrival in Paris about 1880 was an old district of the Nivernais where nothing from the outside world was allowed to penetrate within its charmed circle.

So in this closed vase modelled from the clay of Gaul with its flaxen blue sky and its rivers I discovered all the colours of the universe during my childhood. When staff in hand in later years I scoured the roads of thought, I found nothing that was strange in any country. All the aspects of mind that I found or felt were in their origin the same as mine. Outside experience merely brought me the realisation of my own mind, the states of which I had noted but to which I had no key. Neither Shakespeare nor Beethoven nor Tolstoy nor Rome, the master that nurtured me, ever revealed anything to me except the "Open Sesame" of my subterranean city, my Herculaneum, sleeping under its lava. And I am convinced that it sleeps in the depths of many of those around us. But they are ignorant of its existence just as I was. Few venture beyond the first stage of excavation, which their own practical common sense has shown them to be necessary for their daily use and they economise their needs like those masters who forged first the royal and then the Jacobin unity of France. I admire the structure. A historian by profession, I see in it one of the masterpieces of human effort enlightened by the spirit. *"Aere perrenius . . ."*[4] But according to the old legend which demanded that if a work was to endure a living body should be immured in the walls, our master architects have entombed in their mortar thousands of warm human souls. They can no longer be seen beneath the marble facing and the Roman cement. But I can hear them! And whoever listens will hear them as I do under the noble liturgy of "classic" thought. The Mass celebrated on the High Altar takes no heed of them. But the faithful, the docile and inattentive crowd kneeling and standing at the given signal, ruminate in their dreams upon quite different herbs of St. John.[5] France is rich in souls. But she hides them as an old peasant woman hides her money.

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[4] Horace: "More lasting than brass."

I have just rediscovered the key of the lost staircase leading to some of these proscribed souls. The staircase in the wall, spiral like the coils of a serpent, winds from the subterranean depths of the Ego to the high terraces crowned by the stars. But nothing that I saw there was unknown country. I had seen it all before and I knew it well—but I did not know where I had seen it before. More than once I had recited from memory, though imperfectly, the lesson of thought learned at some former time (but from whom? One of my very ancient selves. . . .) Now I reread it, every word clear and complete, in the book of life held out to me by the illiterate genius who knew all its pages by heart—Ramakrishna.

In my turn I present him to you, not as a new book but as a very old one, which you have all tried to spell out (though many stopped short at the alphabet). Eventually it is always the same book but the writing varies. The eye usually remains fixed on the cover and does not pierce to the kernel.

It is always the same Book. It is always the same Man—the Son of Man, the Eternal, Our Son, Our God reborn. With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe.

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[5] On the Feast of St. John all kinds of herbs are sold in the fairs, having so-called magic properties.

Allowing for differences of country and of time Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ.

We can show, if we choose, and as freethinking exegesists are trying to do today, that the whole doctrine of Christ was current before him in the Oriental soul seeded by the thinkers of Chaldea, Egypt, Athens and Ionia. But we can never stop the person of Christ, whether real or legendary (they are merely two orders of the same reality[6]) from prevailing, and rightly so, in the history of mankind over the personality of a Plato. It is a monumental and necessary creation of the Soul of humanity. It is its most beautiful fruit belonging to one of its autumns. The same tree has produced, according to the same law of nature, the life and the legend. They are both made of the same living body and are the emanation of its look, its breadth and its moisture.

[6] The attitude of religious Indians with regard to legend is a curious and critical one akin to faith. It is very remarkable that the *historic* existence of the personalities they worship as Gods is almost a matter of indifference—at all events quite secondary. So long as they are *spiritually* true their objective reality matters little. Ramakrishna, the greatest of believers said: "Those who have been able to conceive of such ideas ought to be able to be those ideas themselves." And Vivekananda who doubted the objective existence of Krishna and also of Christ (that of Krishna more than that of Christ), declared:

"But today Krishna is the most perfect of the Avatars."

And he worshipped him. (Cf. Sister Nivedita: *Notes of some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda.*)

Truly religious souls recognise the living God just as much in the stamp with which He has marked the brains of a people as in the reality of an Incarnation. They are two equal realities in the eyes of a great believer, for whom everything that is real is God. And he can never quite make up his mind which of the two is the more imposing—the creation of a people or the creation of an age.

I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. It can be shown (and we shall not fail to point out) that this symphony, like those of our classical masters, is built up of a hundred different musical elements emanating from the past. But the sovereign personality concentrating in himself the diversity of these elements and fashioning them into a royal harmony is always the one who gives his name to the work, though it contain within itself the labour of generations. And with his victorious sign he marks a new era.

The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years [7] his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time.[8] But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods. It was a part of the very source of Energy, the divine Sakti, of whom Vidyapati,[9] the old poet of Mithila, and Ramprasad of Bengal sing.

[7] In 1886. He was fifty years old. His great disciple, Vivekananda, died in 1902 at the age of thirty-nine. It should never be forgotten how recently they lived. We have seen the same suns, and the same raft of time has borne us.

[8] The life of Vivekananda was quite different, for he traversed the Old and the New Worlds.

[9] "Show Thyself, O goddess with the thick tresses! . . . Thou art one and many, Thou containest the thousands and Thou fillest the field of battle with the enemy! . . ." (Hymn to the Goddess of Energy, Sakti.)

Very few go back to the source. The little peasant of Bengal by listening to the message of his heart found his way to the inner Sea. And there he was wedded to it, thus bearing out the words of the Upanishads:[10]

"I am more ancient than the radiant Gods. I am the first-born of the Being. I am the artery of Immortality."

It is my desire to bring the sound of the beating of that artery to the ears of fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep. I wish to wet its lips with the blood of Immortality.

R. R.

Christmas, 1928.

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[10] Taittiriya Upanishhad.

According to the Vedanta, when Brahman the Absolute became endowed with qualities and began to evolve the living universe, He became Himself the first evolution, the first-born of Being, which is the Essence of all things visible and invisible. He who speaks thus is supposed to have attained complete identity with Him.

BOOK ONE

PRELUDE

I SHALL begin my story as if it were a fable. But it is an extraordinary fact that this ancient legend, belonging apparently to the realm of mythology, is in reality the account of men who were living yesterday, our neighbours in the "century," and that people alive to-day have seen them with their own eyes.[1] I have received glowing testimony at their hands. I have talked with some among them, who were the companions of this mystic being—of the Man-Gods—and I can vouch for their sincerity. Moreover, these eyewitnesses are not the simple fishermen of the Gospel story; some are real thinkers, learned in European thought and disciplined in its strict school. And yet they speak as men of three thousand years ago.

The co-existence in one and the same brain in this our 20th century of scientific reason and the visionary spirit of ancient times, when, as in the Greek age gods and goddesses shared the bed and the board of mortal man, or as in the age of Galilee, when against the pale summer sky the heavenly winged messenger was seen, bringing the Annunciation to a Virgin, who bent meekly under the gift—this is what our wise men cannot imagine; they are no longer mad enough. And indeed therein lies the real miracle, the richness of this world that they do not know how to enjoy. The majority of European thinkers shut themselves up on their own particular floor of the house of mankind; and although this floor may be stored with libraries containing the history of the other floors inhabited in the past, the rest of the house seems to them to be uninhabited, and they never hear from the floors above or below them the footsteps of their neighbours. In the concert of the world the orchestra is made up of all the centuries past and present, and they all play at the same time; but each has his eyes fixed upon his own stand and on the conductor's baton; he hears nothing but his own instrument.

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[1] At the date when this book was being written (the autumn of 1928) the following direct disciples and eyewitnesses of Ramakrishna were still living:

Swami Shivananda, the Abbot of the central *Math* (monastery) at Belur near Calcutta and the President of the *Ramakrishna Math and Mission;* Sw. Abhedananda; Sw. Akhandananda; Sw. Nirmalananda; Sw. Vijnanananda; Sw. Subhodananda; Mahendra Nath Gupta, editor of Discourses with the Master under the title "The Gospel of Ramakrishna"; Ramlal Chatterji, Ramakrishna's nephew, not to mention lay disciples, whom it is difficult to trace.

But let us listen to the whole splendid harmony of the present, wherein the past dreams and the future aspirations of all races and all ages are blended. For those who have ears to hear every second contains the song of humanity from the first born to the last to die, unfolding like jasmine round the wheel of the ages. There is no need to decipher papyrus in order to trace the road traversed by the thoughts of men. The thoughts of a thousand years are all around us. Nothing is obliterated. Listen! but listen with your ears. Let books be silent! They talk too much. . . .

If there is one place on the face of the earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India. Her unique privilege, as Barth[2] has shown with great clearness, has been that of a great elder sister, whose spiritual development, an autonomous flower continuously growing throughout the Methuselah—long life of the peoples, has never been interrupted. For more than thirty centuries the tree of Vision, with all its thousand branches and their millions of twigs, has sprung from that torrid land, the burning womb of the gods. It renews itself tirelessly, showing no signs of decay; all kinds of fruit ripen upon its boughs at the same time; side by side are found all kinds of gods from the most savage to the highest—to the formless God, the Unnamable, the Boundless One. . . . Always the same tree.

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[2] A. Barth: *The Religions of India*, 1879.

And the substance and thought of its interlaced branches, through which the same sap runs, have been so closely knit together, that from root to topmost twig the whole tree is vibrant, like the mast of the great ship of the Earth, and it sings one great symphony, composed of the thousand voices and the thousand faiths of mankind. Its polyphony, discordant and confused at first to unaccustomed ears, discovers to the trained ear its secret hierarchy and great hidden form. Moreover, those who have once heard it can no longer be satisfied with the rude and artificial order imposed amid desolation by Western reason and its faith or faiths, all equally tyrannical and mutually contradictory. What doth it profit a man to reign over a world for the most part enslaved, debased or destroyed? Better to reign over life, comprehended, reverenced and embraced as one great whole, wherein he must learn how to coordinate its opposing forces in an exact equilibrium.

This is the supreme knowledge we can learn from "Universe Souls," and it is some beautiful examples of such souls that I wish to depict. The secret of their mastery and their serenity is not that of the "lilies of the field, arrayed in glory, who toil not, neither do they spin." They weave the clothes for those who go naked. They have spun the thread of Ariadne to guide us through the mazes of the labyrinth. We have only to hold the length of their thread in our hands to find the right path, the path, which rises from the vast morasses of the soul inhabited by primitive gods stuck fast in the mire, to the peaks crowned by the outspread wings of heaven—τιτὰν αἰθήρ[3]—the intangible Spirit.

And in the life of Ramakrishna, the Man-Gods, I am about to relate the life of this Jacob's ladder, whereon the twofold unbroken line of the Divine in man ascends and descends between heaven and earth.

[3] Empedocles, "the Titan Ether."

PROPHETS OF THE NEW INDIA

BOOK I

BOOK ONE

I

THE GOSPEL OF CHILDHOOD[1]

At Kamarkupur, one of the conical villages of Bengal, set in the midst of palm trees, pools and rice fields, lived an old orthodox Brahmin couple, called Chattopadhyaya. They were very poor and very pious, devotees of the cult of the heroic and virtuous Rama.

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[1] *Note.* I must warn my European readers that in describing this childhood, I have abstained from using my critical faculties (though they keep watch on the threshold). I have become simply the voice of the legend, the flute under the fingers of Krishna. For the present we need not concern ourselves with the objective reality of facts, but only with the subjective reality of living impressions. To undo the web of Penelope is an idle task. I am concerned rather with the dream fashioned under the fingers of a good workman. A great master of learning has set us an example in this. Max Müller, a faithful adherent of the critical methods of the West, and at the same time a respecter of other forms of thought, took down from the lips of Vivekananda an account of the life of the Paramahamsa and faithfully reproduced it in his precious little book. (a) For he maintained that what he calls the "dialogue or dialectic process," used to describe events seen and experienced by contemporaries, a process, which is a kind of inversion of reality by credible and live witnesses, is one of the indispensable elements of history. All knowledge of reality is an inversion through the mind and the senses. Hence all sincere inversion is reality. Critical reason must later evaluate the degree and angle of the vision, and must always take into account the reflection given in the distorting mirror of the mind. (a) Max Müller: *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings,* 1898.

A Paramahamsa is a great bird which flies high, literally, the Indian goose, although it bears no resemblance to the European species. The name is often used for a saint or sage, and is commonly coupled with that of Sri Ramakrishna.

The father, a man as upright as the men of old, had been despoiled of all he possessed, because he had refused to bear false witness to the advantage of the great landowner, who was his neighbour. He received a visitation from the Gods. Although he was then sixty years of age he went on a pilgrimage to Gaya, where is an imprint of the foot of the Lord Vishnu.[2] The Lord appeared to him during the night, and said, "I am about to be reborn for the salvation of the world."

About the same time in Kamarkupur his wife, Chandramani, dreamt that she had been possessed by a God. In the temple opposite her cottage the divine image of Shiva quickened to life under her eyes. A ray of light penetrated to the depths of her being. Under the storm Chandramani was overthrown and fainted. When the prey of the God came to herself, she had conceived. Her husband on his return found her transfigured. She heard voices; she carried a God.[3]

The child, whom the world was to know as Ramakrishna, was born on February 18, 1836. But the gay name with the tripping cadences of a bell that he bore in childhood was Gadadhar. He was a little boy full of fun and life, mischievous and charming, with a feminine grace he preserved to the end of his life. Nobody imagined—himself least of all—what infinite spaces, what tremendous depths lay hidden in the little body of this laughing child. They were revealed to him when he was six years old. One day in June or July (1842) he was sauntering along with a meal as small as a bird's of a little puffed rice carried in a fold of his garment. He was going to the fields.

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[2] Buddha is now regarded by the people as one of the numerous Incarnations of Vishnu.

[3] Indian legends tell of more than one "Immaculate Conception."

"I was following a narrow path between the rice fields. I raised my eyes to the sky as I munched my rice. I saw a great black cloud spreading rapidly until it covered the heavens. Suddenly at the edge of the cloud a flight of snow-white cranes passed over my head. The contrast was so beautiful that my spirit wandered far away. I lost consciousness and fell to the ground. The puffed rice was scattered. Somebody picked me up and carried me home in his arms. An access of joy and emotion overcame me. . . . This was the first time that I was seized with ecstasy."

He was destined thus to pass half his life.

Even in this first ecstasy the real character of the divine impress on the soul of the child can be seen. Artistic emotion, a passionate instinct for the beautiful, was the first channel bringing him into contact with God. There are—as we shall see—many other paths along which revelation may come, either love of a dear one, or thought, or self-mastery, or honest and disinterested labour, of compassion or meditation. He came to know them all, but the most immediate and natural with him was delight in the beautiful face of God which he saw in all that he looked upon. He was a born artist. In this how greatly he differs from that other great soul, the *Mahatma* of India, whose European evangelist I have already become—Gandhi, the man without art, the man without visions, who does not even desire them, who mistrusts them rather—the man who lives in God through reasoned action, as is inevitable in a born leader of the people. The path of Ramakrishna is a far more dangerous one, but it leads further; from the precipices skirted by it limitless horizons open out. It is the way of love.

It is the way made peculiarly their own by his Bengal countrymen, a race of artists and lover poets. Its inspired guide had been the ecstastic lover of Krishna, Chaitanya, and its most exquisite music the delicious songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati.[4] These seraphic masters, the scented flowers of their soil, have impregnated it with their fragrance so that Bengal has been intoxicated with it for centuries. The soul of the little

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[4] Chaitanya (1485-1553), the descendant of a family of Bengal Brahmins, after having achieved a great reputation as a theological and Sanskrit scholar, shook off the dust of the old religion with its paralysing formalism. He went out into the highways to preach a new gospel of love founded on mystic union with God. It was open to all men and women of all religions and all castes as brothers, and even to those without caste; Musulmans, Hindus, beggars, pariahs, thieves, prostitutes, all came together to listen to his burning message and went away purified and strengthened.

An extraordinary "Awakening" was heralded during the course of a century by the songs of a series of wonderful poets. The most exquisite of these singers was Chandidas, the poor priest of a ruined temple in Bengal, the lover of a young peasant girl, whom he hymned in mystic form in a number of immortal little poems. Nothing in the treasury of our European *lieder* can surpass the touching beauty of these divine elegies. Vidyapati, the aristocrat, whose inspiration was a Queen, attained by refined art to the natural perfection of the simple Chandidas, but his key is a more joyful one. (My earnest desire is to see some real Western poet transplanting these songs into our rose garden. There they would bloom afresh in every loving heart).

Chaitanya's disciples spread throughout Bengal. They went from village to village, singing and dancing to a new form of music called *Kirtana,* the wandering Bride, the Human Soul, seeking the Divine Love. The Ganges boatmen and the peasants took up this dream of the Awakened Sleeper, and his melodious echoes still fill the sovereign art of Tagore, especially in the *Gardener* and the *Gitanjali.* The feet of the child Ramakrishna moved to the rhythm of these Kirtanas. He drank the milk of this Vaishnavite music, and it is true to say that he himself became its masterpiece, his own life its most beautiful poem.

Ramakrishna was made of the same substance; it was flesh of their flesh, and he was looked upon as a flowering branch of the tree of Chaitanya.[5]

The lover of divine beauty, the artistic genius as yet unaware of itself, appears again in a later ecstasy. One night during the festival of Shiva this child of eight years old, a passionate lover of music and poetry, a skilful modeller of images and the leader of a small dramatic troupe of boys of his own age, was taking the part of Shiva in the sacred representation; suddenly his being was possessed by his hero; tears of joy coursed down his little cheeks; he lost himself in the glory of God; he was transported like Ganymede by the Eagle carrying the thunderbolt—he was thought to be dead. . . .

From that time the ecstasies became more frequent. In Europe the case would have been foredoomed and the child would have been placed in a lunatic asylum under a daily douche of psycho-therapy. Conscientiously day by day the flame would have been quenched. The magic lantern would have been no more! "The candle is dead." [6] Sometimes the child also dies. Even in India where the centuries have seen a constant procession of such magic lanterns, anxiety was felt, and his father and mother, although accustomed to the visitation of gods, regarded the child's transports with fear. But apart from these crises, he enjoyed perfect health and was not at all supernormal in spite of his many gifts. His ingenious fingers fashioned gods from clay, the heroic legends blossomed in his mind; he sang divinely the pastoral airs of Sri Krishna; and sometimes his precocious intellect took part in the discussions of learned men whom he astonished as Jesus had astonished the Jewish doctors. But this boy with his clear skin, beautiful flowing locks, attractive smile, charming voice and independent spirit, who played truant from school and who lived as free as air, remained a child to the end of his life, like the little Mozart. Until he was thirteen he was adored and petted by the women and girls. They recognised in him something of their own femininity; for he had so far assimilated their nature that one of his childish dreams, cradled as he was in the legend of Krishna and the Gopis, was to be reborn as a little widow, a lover of Krishna, who would be visited by him in her home. This was but one of the innumerable incarnations he imagined. Instinctively this Protean soul took on instantly each of the beings whom he saw or imagined. No man is entirely void of this magic plasticity. One of its inferior manifestations is that of a mimic, who copies attitude and facial expressions; its highest (if such an expression may be used) is that of the God who plays for Himself the Comedy of the Universe. It is always the sign of art and love. Thus was foreshadowed the marvelous power manifested later by Ramakrishna a genius for espousing all the souls in the world.

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[5] A letter from Ramakrishna's learned disciple, the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* Mahendra Nath Gupta, has cleared up certain points with regard to this question.

Ramakrishna knew the great Vaishnavite poets, but it appears that his knowledge was gleaned mainly from popular adaptations used in the performances of the native theatres, called *jatras,* such as the one wherein as a child he played the part of Shiva. He was inspired by Chaitanya especially after 1858, and ended by identifying himself with him. In one of his first interviews with the young Naren (Vivekananda) he scandalised the young man by saying to him that he had been Chaitanya in a pervious Incarnation. He did a great deal to revive Chaitanya's mystic meaning, which had been forgotten in Bengal.

[6] Allusion to the well known French folksong: "Au clair de la lune."

His father died when he was seven years old. The next few years were difficult ones for the family, for they had no resources. The eldest son, Ramkumar,[7] went to Calcutta and opened a school there. He sent for his younger brother, now an adolescent, in 1852, but the latter, filled with the urge of his inner life and quite undisciplined, refused to learn.

At that time there was a rich woman, named Rani Rasmani, belonging to an inferior caste. At Dakshineswar on the Eastern bank of the Ganges, some four miles from Calcutta, she founded a temple to the Great Goddess, the Divine Mother, Kali. She had considerable difficulty in finding a Brahmin to serve as its priest. Strangely enough religious India with its veneration for monks, *Sadhus,* and seers, has little respect for the paid office of priest. The temples are not, as in Europe, the body and the heart of God, the shrines of His daily renewed sacrifice. They are the praiseworthy foundations of the rich, who hope thereby to gain credit with the Divinity. True religion is a private affair; its temple is each individual soul. In this case, moreover, the founder of the temple was a *Sudra,* an additional disqualification for any Brahmin who undertook the charge. Ramkumar resigned himself to it in 1855; but his young brother, who was very strict in all questions relating to caste, was only reconciled to the idea with very great difficulty. Little by little, however, his repugnance was overcome, and when in the following year his eldest brother died, Ramakrishna decided to take his place.

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[7] Ramakrishna was the fourth of five children.

II

KALI THE MOTHER

The young priest of Kali was twenty years old. He did not know what a terrible mistress he had elected to serve. As a purring tigress that fascinates her prey, She was to feed upon him, playing with him for ten long enchanted years passed beneath Her gleaming pupils. He lived in the temple alone with Her, but at the centre of a whirling cyclone. For the burning breath of a crowd of visionaries blew like the monsoon its eddies of dust through the door of the temple. Thither came countless pilgrims, monks, *sadhus,* fakirs, Hindus and Musulmans—a congregation of the madmen of God.[1]

The temple was a vast building with five domes crowned with spires. It was reached by an open terrace above the Ganges between a double row of twelve small domed temples to Shiva. On the other side of a great rectangular paved court arose another vast temple to Krishna and Radha next to that of Kali.[2] The whole symbolic world was represented—the Trinity of the Nature Mother (Kali), the Absolute, (Shiva), and Love (Radhakanta: Krishna, Radha), the Arch spanning heaven and earth. But Kali was the sovereign deity.

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[1] There were the madmen of the Book, controlled by the single word, *O M.* There were those who danced and were convulsed with laughter, crying Bravo to the Illusion of the world. There were naked men living with the dogs on beggar's scraps, who no longer distinguished between one form and another and were attached to nothing. There were the mystic and drunken bands of *Tantrikas.* Young Ramakrishna observed them all (he was to describe them later, not without humour) with a watchful and anxious eye, and a mixture of repulsion and fascination. (Cf. Life of Ramakrishna).

Within the temple She dwelt, a basalt figure, dressed in sumptuous Benares tissue, the Queen of the world and of the Gods. She was dancing upon the outstretched body of Shiva. In Her two arms on the left she held a sword and a severed head, on the right She offered gifts and beckoned, "Come! Fear not! . . ." She was Nature, the destroyer and the creator. Nay, She was something greater still for those who had ears to hear. She was the Universal Mother, "my Mother, the all-powerful, who reveals Herself to Her children under different aspects and Divine Incarnations," the visible God, who leads the elect to the invisible God, "and if it so please Her, She takes away the last trace of the ego from all created beings and absorbs it into the consciousness of the Absolute, the undifferentiated God. Thanks to Her the finite ego loses itself in the illimitable Ego—Atman—Brahman." [3]

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[2] The temple is still in existence. Ramakrishna's room at the northwest corner of the court, adjacent to the series of the twelve temples of Shiva, has a semi-circular verandah, its roof supported by columns, looking onto the Ganges on the west. A great hall for music and sacred representations opened onto the great court. On either side there were guest rooms, with kitchens for visitors and for the Gods. To the west lay a beautiful shady garden and ponds on the north and the east. It was carefully cultivated and full of flowers and scents. Beyond the garden can be seen the group of five sacred trees, planted at the desire of Ramakrishna. They became famous under the name of the *Panchavati.* There he spent his days in meditation and prayer to the Mother. Below murmured the Ganges.

[3] Ramakrishna.

But the young priest of twenty was still far from reaching the core where all reality was fused—even by the indirect ways of the intellect. The only reality, divine or human, accessible to him as yet, was that which he could see, hear and touch. In this he was no different from the majority of his people. That which is most striking to European believers, to Protestant Christians even more than to Catholic, is the intense concreteness of religious vision experienced by Indian believers. When later Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna,

"Have you seen God?"

He replied:

"I see Him, as I see you, only far more intensely," meaning not in the impersonal and abstract sense, although he practised that as well.

And it is by no means the privilege of a few inspired persons. Every sincere Hindu devotee attains this point with ease, so overflowing and so fresh is the source of creative life in them even to-day. One of our friends went to the temple with a young princess of Nepal, a beautiful, intelligent and educated girl. She left her to pray for a long time in the intoxicating silence of the incense-filled dimness, lighted only with a single lamp. When the young Princess came out, she said to her, very quietly,

"I have seen Rama. . . ."

How then could Ramakrishna have escaped seeing "the Mother with the dark blue skin?" She, the Visible One, was the Incarnation of the forces of Nature and of the Divine in the form of a woman, who has intercourse with mortal men—Kali. Within Her temple She enveloped him in the scent of her body, wound him in Her arms and entangled him in Her hair. She was no lay figure with a fixed smile, whose food consisted of litanies. She lived, breathed, arose from Her couch, ate, walked, lay down again. The service of the temple docilely followed the rhythm of her days. Every morning at dawn the peals of little bells chimed, the lights were swung. In the music room the flutes played the sacred hymn to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. The Mother awoke. From the garden, embowered in jasmine and roses, garlands were gathered for Her adornment. At nine in the morning music summoned to worship and to it came the Mother. At noon She was escorted to rest on Her silver bed during the heat of the day to the strains of more music.[4] It greeted her at six in the evening when She reappeared. It played again to the accompaniment of brandished torches at sundown for evening worship; and conches sounded and little bells tinkled ceaselessly until finally at nine in the evening it heralded the hour for repose when the Mother slept.

And the priest was associated with all the intimate acts of the day. He dressed and undressed Her, he offered Her flowers and food. He was one of the attendants when the Queen arose and went to bed. How could his hands, his eyes, his heart be otherwise than gradually impregnated with Her flesh? The very first touch left the sting of Kali in his fingers and united them for ever.

But after She had left Her sting in him She fled, and withheld Herself from him. Having pierced him with Her love, the wasp had concealed Herself in Her stone sheathe, and all his efforts failed to bring Her to life again. Passion for the dumb Goddess consumed him. To touch Her, to embrace Her, to win one sign of life from Her, one look, one sigh, one smile, became the sole object of his existence. He flung himself down in the wild jungle-like part of the garden, meditating and praying. He tore off all his clothes, even to the sacred cord, which no Brahman ever lays aside; but love for the Mother had revealed to him that no man can contemplate God unless he has shed all his prejudices. Like a lost child in tears he besought the Mother to show Herself to him. Every day spent in vain effort increased his distraction, and he lost all control over himself. In despair he writhed on the ground in front of visitors, and became an object of pity, of mockery, even of scandal; but he cared for none of these things. Only one thing mattered. He knew that he was on the verge of extreme happiness—nothing but a thin partition, which he was, nevertheless, powerless to break down, separated him from it. He knew nothing of the science of directed ecstasy, as minutely noted and codified by religious India for centuries past with all the minutiæ of a double Faculty of Medicine and Theology, and so he wandered haphazard, driven by a blind delirium. As his exaltation was entirely undirected, he ran considerable danger of extinction. Death lies in wait for the imprudent *Yogin,* whose path traverses the very edge of the abyss. He is described by those who saw him in those days of bewilderment, as having face and breast reddened by the afflux of blood, his eyes filled with tears and his body shaken with spasms. He was at the limit of physical endurance. When such a point has been reached, there is nothing but descent into the darkness of apoplexy—or vision.

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[4] At the northwest corner of the temple.

The partition was suddenly removed and he saw!

Let him speak for himself. His voice rings in our ears with the accents of our own "madmen of God," our great seers of Europe.

"One day I was torn with intolerable anguish. My heart seemed to be wrung as a damp cloth might be wrung. . . . I was wracked with pain. A terrible frenzy seized me at the thought that I might never be granted the blessing of this Divine vision. I thought if that were so, then enough of this life! A sword was hanging in the sanctuary of Kali. My eye fell upon it and an idea flashed through my brain like a flash of lightning—'The sword! It will help me to end it.' I rushed up to it, and seized it like a madman. . . . And lo! the whole scene, doors, windows, the temple itself, vanished. . . . It seemed as if nothing existed any more. Instead I saw an ocean of the Spirit, boundless, dazzling. In whatever direction I looked great luminous waves were rising. They bore down upon me with a loud roar, as if to swallow me up. In an instant they were upon me, they broke over me, they engulfed me. I as suffocated. I lost consciousness[5] and I fell. . . . How I passed that day and the next I know not. Round me rolled an ocean of ineffable joy. And in the depths of my being I was conscious of the presence of the Divine Mother.[6]

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[5] The exact text reads, "I lost all *natural* consciousness." This detail is important, for the rest of the story shows that a higher consciousness, that of the inner world, was on the other hand most keenly perceptive.

[6] *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master,* Vol. II, by Swami Saradananda, published by the Ramakrishna Math of Mylapore, Madras, 1920. Saradananda, who died in 1927, was on terms of intimacy with Ramakrishna and likewise possessed one of the loftiest religious and philosophical minds in India. His biography, unfortunately unfinished, is at once the most interesting and the most reliable.

It is noticeable that in this beautiful description there is no mention of the Divine Mother until the end; she was merged in the Ocean. The disciples who afterwards quoted his exact words, asked him whether he had really seen the Divine form. "He did not say, but on coming to himself from his ecstasy he murmured in a plaintive tone, 'Mother! . . . Mother!' "

My own view, if I may be pardoned the presumption, is that he *saw* nothing, but that he was *aware* of Her all-permeating presence. He called the Ocean by her name. His experience was like a dream, to give a lesser example, wherein without the slightest feeling of incongruity, the mind attaches the name of the being filling its thoughts to quite a different form; the object of our love is in everything; all forms are but its cloak. On the shores of that sea which rolled down upon Ramakrishana, I see immediately the form of St. Theresa of Avila. She also felt herself engulfed in the infinite until the scruples of her Christian faith and the stern admonitions of her watchful directors led her against her own convictions to confine God within the form of the Son of Man.[7]

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[7] It was also at a moment of extreme lassitude that Theresa perceived, like a sudden inflooding, the invasion of the Invisible; just such a sea engulfed her. Later on the hard scruples of Salcedo and Gaspard Daza forced her, at the cost of considerable suffering, to confine the Infinite within the finite bounds of the body of Christ.

Further, the ecstasy in Ramakrishna's case followed the normal course of such revelations, as was only natural. Cf. the full collection of documents, gathered together by Starbuck under the title, *The Psychology of Religion,* a collection used by William James. Almost always it comes about that when effort has been exhausted the spirit attains through anguish. The despair crushing the old self is the door leading to the new.

Again it is a remarkable fact that the great vision often manifests itself through "photisms" (luminous phenomena) and by an

But Ramakrishna the lover had not to struggle against the bent of his heart. On the contrary it led him from the formless to the form of his Beloved. He wished it to; for once he had seen and possessed it for an instant, he could not live without it. From that day onward he would have ceased to exist if he had not constantly renewed the fiery vision. Without it the world was dead, and living men as nothing but vain shadows, painted figures upon a screen.

But nobody faces the illimitable with impunity. The shock of the first encounter was so violent that his whole being remained in a shuddering state. He only saw those around him through a veil of drifting mist, of dissolving waves of silver shot with sparks of fire. He could no longer control his eyes, his body, or his mind; another will guided them, and he passed through some terrible hours. He prayed the Mother to come to his aid.

Then suddenly he understood. He was possessed by the Mother. He ceased to resist. *"Fiat voluntas tua! . . ."* She filled him. And out of the mists little by little the material form of the Goddess emerged, first a hand, then Her breath, Her voice, finally Her whole person. Here is one of the marvellous visions of the poet, among a hundred others.

It was evening. The rites were over for the day. The Mother was supposed to be asleep, and he had re-

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oceanic flood. Cf. pp. 215-216, William James, *Religious Experience,* giving the beautiful account of President Finney's vision:

"'Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love . . .' These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, 'I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.' I said, 'Lord, I cannot bear any more'; yet I had no fear of death."

Cf. also the magnificent account of the great mystic as observed and described by Th. Flournoy.

turned to his room outside the temple above the Ganges. But he could not sleep. He listened. . . . He heard Her get up; She went up to the upper story of the temple with the joy of a young girl. As She walked the rings of Her anklets rang. He wondered if he were dreaming. His heart hammered in his breast. He went out into the court and raised his head. There he saw Her with unbound hair on the balcony of the first floor, watching the Ganges flow through the beautiful night down to the distant lights of Calcutta. . . .

From that moment his days and nights were passed in the continual presence of his Beloved. Their intercourse was uninterrupted like the flow of the river. Eventually he was identified with Her, and gradually the radiance of his inner vision became outwardly manifest. Other people seeing him, saw what he saw. Through his body as through a window appeared the bodies of the Gods. Mathur Babu, the son-in-law of the foundress of the temple and the master of the place, was sitting one day in his room opposite Ramakrishna's. Unobserved he watched him pacing up and down upon his balcony. Suddenly he uttered a cry, for he saw him alternately in the form of Shiva as he walked in one direction, and of the Mother as he turned and walked in the opposite direction.

To most people his madness of love was a crying scandal. He was no longer capable of performing the temple rites. In the midst of the ritual acts he was seized with fits of unconsciousness, sudden collapses and petrifactions, when he lost the control of the use of his joints and stiffened into a statue. At other times he permitted himself the strangest familiarities with the

Goddess.[8] His functions remained in a state of suspension. He never closed his eyes. He no longer ate. If a nephew who was present had not looked after his most pressing needs, he would have died. Such a condition brought those evils in its train, from which our Western visionaries have also suffered. Minute drops of blood oozed through his skin. His whole body seemed on fire. His spirit was a furnace, whose leaping flames were the Gods. After a period when he saw the Gods in the persons about him (in a prostitute he saw Sita; in a young Englishman standing upright cross-legged against a tree, he saw Krishna), he became the Gods himself. He *was* Kali, he *was* Rama, he *was* Radha, the lover of Krishna,[9] he *was* Sita, he *was* the great monkey, Hanuman![10] Without insisting on detail, I have no intention of passing lightly over these deliriums of a soul with neither check nor pilot, given over to the furious waves of his passion, to the insatiable voracity of a wolf, ravening for the Gods. Later they had their revenge and preyed upon him in their turn. I have no intention of deceiving my Western reader. He is at liberty, just as I was myself,[11] to judge whether the madman of God ought to have been put in a strait jacket or not. We have good ground for such an opinion, for even in India men of the greatest sanctity held that view when they saw him. At the time he submitted patiently to be examined by doctors and followed their vain prescriptions and later, when he looked back over the past and sounded the depths of the abyss from which he had escaped, he himself could not understand why his reason, and even life itself, had not foundered.

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[8] He no longer showed any consideration for his patrons, whose exemplary fidelity consistently defended him against all attack. One day when the rich devotee, the foundress, Rani Rasmani, was praying with her mind elsewhere, Ramakrishna discerned the frivolous objects passing through her thoughts and publicly rebuked her. Those present were greatly excited, but Rasmani herself remained calm. She nobly considered that it was the Mother, who had rebuked her.

[9] Later he was the *gopi* (milkmaid), Krishna's lover, for six months.

[10] The process of these realisations is interesting. He became the person of Rama by stages, through the people who served Rama, beginning with the humblest, Hanuman. Then in reward, as he himself believed Sita appeared to him. This was his first complete vision with his eyes open. All his succeeding visions came by the same successive stages. First he saw the figures *outside himself,* then they *vanished within himself,* finally he *became them himself.* This ardent creative act is striking, but was natural to one of his astounding plastic genius. As soon as he visualised a thought, his vision became incarnate. Imagine living within the innermost being of a Shakespeare, while he was producing a film.

But the extraordinary thing for us, and the only thing that matters, is that, instead of foundering, they rounded the Cape of Storms victoriously. Nay, this period of hallucination appears to have been a necessary stage whence his spirit was to rise in the fullness of joyous and harmonious power to mighty realisations for the benefit of humanity. Here is a subject of research tempting to great physicians both of the body and of the mind. There is no difficulty in proving the apparent destruction of his whole mental structure, and the disintegration of its elements. But how were they reassembled into a synthetic entity of the highest order? How was this ruined building restored to a still greater edifice and by nothing but will power? As we shall see by the sequel, Ramakrishna became master alike of his madness and of his reason, of Gods and of men. At times he would open the floodgates of the deeps of his soul, at others would conduct with his disciples smiling dialogues, in the manner of a modern Socrates, full of ironic wisdom and penetrating good sense.

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[11] I will not deny the fact that when I had reached this point in my researches, I shut up the book. Probably I should not have opened it again for a long time, if I had not known by certain indications what heights of wisdom he was to attain in the later years of his life.

But in 1858 at the time of the facts related here, Ramakrishna had not yet achieved the mastery. He had still a long way to go. And if I have anticipated somewhat the end of his life, I have done so to warn the European reader against his first judgment, which was also my own. Patience! The ways of the spirit are disconcerting. Let us await the end!

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In truth at this period the tramp of God went about like a blind man with closed eyes and without a guide. Instead of keeping to the path, he forced his way through the briers of the hedges and fell into the ditches. Nevertheless he advanced; each time that he fell he picked himself up again and went on his way.

Do not imagine that he was proud or obstinate. He was the most simple of men. If you had told him that his condition was a disease, he would have asked you to prescribe a remedy, and he would not have refused to try any cure.

For a time he was sent back to his home at Kamarpukur. His mother wished him to be married, hoping that marriage would cure him of his divine enchantment. He made no demur; indeed, he showed an innocent pleasure at the thought. But what a strange marriage it was, not much more real (less real, indeed, in spirit) than his union with the Goddess! His bride (1859) was a child of five years old. I feel, as I write, what a shock this will be to my Western reader. I do not wish to spare him. Child-marriage is an Indian custom, and one which has most often roused the indignation of Europe and America. The virtuous Miss Mayo has recently raised its flag, though rather a tattered one; for the best minds of India, the Brahmo Samaj, Tagore, Gandhi,[12] have for long condemned the practice, although it is usually more of a formality than a reality—child-marriage being generally nothing more than a simple religious ceremony, akin to a Western betrothal, remaining unconsummated until after puberty. In the case of Ramakrishna, making it doubly revolting in the eyes of Miss Mayo, the union was between a little girl of five and a man of twenty-three! But peace to scandalised minds! It was a union of souls and remained unconsummated—a Christian marriage so-called in the days of the Early Church—and later it became a beautiful thing. A tree must be judged by its fruits, and in this case the fruits were of God, pure and not carnal love. Little Saradamani[13] was to become the chaste sister of a big friend who venerated her, the immaculate companion of his trials and of his faith, the firm and serene soul, whom the disciples associated with his sanctity as the *Holy Mother.*[14]

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[12] Gandhi, who knows too much about child-marriage, (for he was one of those children who has kept throughout his life the burning confusion of his precocious experiences) is particularly virulent against this abuse. Nevertheless he recognises that in exceptional cases among chosen souls, who are loyal and religious, a mutual engagement dating from infancy may have very pure and beneficent results. It removes all other temptations common to the unhealthy preoccupations of adolescence, and it gives to the union a quality of holy comradeship. It is well known what an admirable companion the little child, whose fate was joined to his, has been for Gandhi during the difficult course of his life.

[13] Her family name was Mukhopadhyaya. Afterwards she was known by the name of Saradadevi.

For the time being the little girl returned according to custom to the house of her parent's after the ceremony of marriage had been performed, and did not see her husband again for the long period of eight or nine years, while her husband, who seemed to have regained some measure of calm at his mother's house, returned to his temple.

But Kali was waiting for him. Hardly had he crossed the threshold than divine delirium in its most violent form was rekindled. Like Hercules in a Nessus shirt, he was a living funeral pyre. The legion of Gods swooped upon him like a whirlwind. He was torn in pieces. He was divided against himself. His madness returned tenfold. He saw demoniac creatures emerging from him, first a black figure representing sin; then a *sannyasin,* who slew sin like an archangel. (Are we in India or a thousand years ago in some Christian monastery of the West?) He remained motionless, watching these manifestations issue from him. Horror paralysed his limbs. Once again for long periods [15] at a time his eyes refused to close. He felt madness approaching and terrified, he appealed to the Mother. The vision of Kali was his only hope of survival. Two years went by in this orgy of mental intoxication and despair.[16]

At length help came.

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[14] So she has been called. The Indian of good family has always had this exquisite custom of giving the name "Mother" to all womanhood, however much younger than himself.

[15] He claims for six years.

[16] In 1861 his protectress, Rami Rasmani, died. Fortunately her son-in-law, Mathur Babu, remained devoted to him.

III

THE TWO GUIDES TO KNOWLEDGE; THE BHARAVI BRAHAMI AND TOTAPURI

UP to this point he had been swimming alone at the mercy of chance in an uncharted and boundless stream with its roaring rapids and whirlpools of the soul. He was on the verge of exhaustion, when two beings appeared on the scene, who held his head above water, and who taught him how to use its currents in order to cross the stream.

The age-long history of the spirit of India is the history of a countless throng marching ever to the conquest of supreme Reality. All the great peoples of the world, wittingly or unwittingly, have the same fundamental aim; they belong to the conquerors who age by age go up to assault the Reality of which they form a part, and which lures them on to strive and climb; sometimes they fall out exhausted, then with recovered breath they mount undaunted until they have conquered or been overcome. But each one does not see the same face of Reality. It is like a great fortified city beleaguered on different sides by different armies who are not in alliance. Each army has its own tactics and weapons to solve its own problems of attack and assault. Our Western races[1] storm the bastions, the outer works. They desire to overcome the physical forces of Nature, to make her laws their own, so that they may construct weapons therefrom for gaining the inner citadel, and forcing the whole fortress to capitulate.

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[1] In order to explain my meaning I am obliged to use the doubtful terms, West and East. But I hope that wise readers will distinguish, as I do, many divisions of the West. For us the

India proceeds along different lines. She goes straight to the centre, to the Commander-in-Chief of the unseen General Headquarters; for the Reality she seeks is transcendental. But let us be careful not to put Western "realism" in opposition to Indian "idealism." Both are "realisms." Indians are essentially *realists* in that they are not easily contented with abstractions, and that they attain their ideal by the self-chosen means of enjoyment and sensual possession. They must see, hear, taste and touch ideas. Both in sensual richness and in their extraordinary imaginative power they are far in advance of the West.[2] How then can we reject their evidence in the name of Western reason? Reason, in our eyes, is an impersonal and objective path open to all men. But is reason really objective? To what degree is it true in particular instances? Has it no personal limits? Again, has it been carefully noted that the "realisations" of the Hindu mind, which seems to

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East in its ordinary sense means the Near East, the Semitic East, which in my sense of the word is further in spirit from India than some parts of the West, Slav, Germanic or Nordic. At this place in the story I am using the term West to indicate the march to the West of the great European races and those on the other side of the Atlantic, who have detached themselves from the common Indo-European stock.

[2] I am far from denying to Indian thinkers a capacity for intellectual concentration in the Absolute; but even the *"Formless"* of the *Advaita Vedanta* is embraced to a certain extent by their burning intuition. Even if the "Formless" is without attributes and beyond vision, is it so certain that it is beyond some form of mysterious touch? Is not revelation itself a kind of terrible contact?

us ultra-subjective, are nothing of the kind in India, where they are the logical result of scientific methods and of careful experiment, tested throughout the centuries and duly recorded? Each great religious visionary is able to show his disciples the way by which without a shadow of doubt they too may attain the same visions. Surely both methods, the Eastern and the Western, merit an almost equal measure of scientific doubt and provisional trust. To the truly scientific mind of to-day a widely generalised mistake, if it be sincere, is a relative truth. If the vision is false, the important thing to be discovered is wherein lies the fallacy, and then to allow it other premises to lead on to the higher reality beyond it.

The common belief of India, whether clearly defined or vaguely felt, is that nothing exists save in and through the universal Spirit, the one and indivisible: Brahman.[3] The diverse images of everything contained in the universe had their birth in Him, and the reality of the universe is derived from the same universal Spirit, whose conception it is. Individual spirits, we who form an integral and organic part of the Cosmic Spirit, see the idea of the multiform and changing universe, and we attribute an independent reality to it. Until we have achieved knowledge of the one Brahman, we are bewildered by *Maya,* Illusion, which has no beginning and is outside time; and so we take what is nothing but an incessant stream of passing images, springing from the invisible source, the One Reality,[4] to be the permanent reality.

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[3] "Everything is Braham, all the various objects, both coarse and refined. Everything exists only in Brahman, the one and indivisible."—Shastras.

[4] I have taken this brief summary of thought from the masterly exposition of Swami Saradananda at the beginning of his *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master.*

Hence we must escape from the stream of Illusion, rolling all round us, and like trout that leap over all barriers and scale waterfalls, we must go back to the source. Such is our unavoidable destiny, but it leads to salvation. *Sadhana* is the name given to this painful but heroic and magnificent struggle. The *Sadhakas* are they who wage it. Their small legion, renewed from age to age, is recruited from the fearless souls; for they have to submit to a system of application and rough discipline having the sanction of age-long experiment behind them. Two ways or weapons [5] are open to them, both needing long application and constant practise. The first is the way of "Not this! Not this!" [6] which may be called the way of Knowledge by radical negation or the weapon of the *Jnanin;* the second is the way of "This! This!" which may be called the way of Knowledge by progressive affirmation, or the weapon of the *Bhakta.* The first relies solely on intellectual knowledge, and has always rejected everything, either real or apparent, outside it, proceeding with strained resolutions and eyes fixed on the supreme goal. The second is the way of love. The love of the Well-Beloved (whose form varies as it becomes more pure) gradually leads to the renunciation of all else. The way of *Jnana* is that of the absolute or impersonal God. The way of *Bhakti* is that of the personal God—at least its pilgrims linger long on the way before finally rejoining the pilgrim of *Jnana.*

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[5] There are many others which I shall discuss in the second part of this work, when I study the philosophic and religious thought of Vivekananda. There I shall find room for a long exposition of the *Yoga* principle of India.

[6] *Neti* (not this) is the name given to Brahman himself by the authors of the Upanishads. Cf. the work of the Christian mystic, St. Denis, the Areopagite: *Treatise on Mystic Theology,* Chapter V, where he says that the supreme author of intelligible things is absolutely nothing that can be conceived by the understanding. There the master theologian collects on one page all the negatives in order to define God. (*The Works of St. Denis the Areopagite,* trans. and ed. by Mgr. Darboy, new edition, 1887. pp. 285-286.)

The way of *Bhakti* was the way the blind instinct of Ramakrishna had unconsciously adopted from the first. But he knew nothing of its windings and lurking ambushes. It was true that a complete Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem [7] existed, wherein the whole course from the starting point to the winning post was carefully mapped out, containing all the accidents of the way, the mountains and the gradients, the dangerous corners and the stopping places, carefully arranged in advance and wisely distributed. But the runner of Kamarpukur knew nothing of it. He went where his wild heart and his legs carried him; and at last, exhausted by his superhuman efforts, without guidance or assistance, maddened with solitude in the depths of the forest he had moments when he gave himself up for lost. He had almost reached the last rough halting place, when help came to him through a woman.

One day from his terrace he was watching the boats with their multi-coloured sails darting to and fro upon the Ganges, when he saw one put in at the foot of his terrace. A woman came up the steps. She was tall and beautiful, with long unbound hair and wearing the saffron robe of a *Sannyasin.*[8] She was between thirty-five and forty, but she looked younger. Ramakrishna was struck with her appearance and sent for her. She came. As soon as she saw him, she burst into tears and said,

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[7] Allusion to the name of a famous book by Chateaubriand.

[8] A *Sannyasin,* according to Max Müller's definition is a person who has left everything and renounced all worldly desire. The definition of the *Bhagavadgita* is, "One who neither hates nor loves anything." The lady in question had not yet attained this state of divine indifference, as we shall see later.

"My son, I have been looking for you for a long time." [9]

She was a Brahmin of a noble Bengal family, a devotee of Vishnu,[10] highly educated and very learned in holy texts, especially in the Bhakti Scriptures. She said she was looking for the man inspired by God, whose existence had been revealed to her by the Spirit, and that she had been entrusted with a message for him. Without further introduction and without even discovering her name (she was never known by any other than that of the *Bhairavi Brahmani,* the Brahmin nun) the relations of mother and son were established there and then between the holy woman and the priest of Kali. Ramakrishna confided in her as a child might have done and told her all the tortured experiences of his life in God, of his *Sadhana,* together with the misery of his bodily and mental sufferings. He told her that many thought him mad, and asked her humbly and anxiously whether they were right. The *Bhairavi,* having heard all his confessions, comforted him with maternal tenderness, and told him to have no fear, for he had certainly reached one of the highest states of the *Sadhana* as described in the *Bhakti* texts by his own unguided efforts. His sufferings were simply the measure of his ascent. She looked after his bodily welfare and enlightened his mind. She made him in broad daylight go back over the road of knowledge, which he had already traversed alone and blindfold in the night. By instinct alone Ramakrishna had obtained in the course of several years "realisations" which mystic science had taken centuries to achieve; but he could not become truly their master until he had been shown the way whereby he had achieved them.

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[9] This encounter with the simple charm of a story from the Arabian Nights, has roused doubts in the mind of European historians. They are inclined to see in this episode, as does Max Müller, a symbol of the psychic evolution of Ramakrishna. But the personality of his instructress during the six years she remained with him contains too many individual traits (and not always to her credit), for there to be any doubt that she was a real woman, with all a woman's weaknesses.

[10] The *Vaishnavite* cult was essentially a cult of love. Ramakrishna belonged to a Vaishnava family.

Vishnu, the ancient sun god, established his sovereignty over the whole world by his incarnations, the chief being Krishna and Rama. (Cf. Barth, op. cit. p. 100 *et seq.*) Both these divinities appear in the name of the hero of this story, while he was himself saluted later in his life as a new incarnation, an *Avatara,* God and man.

The *Bhakta,* whose knowledge is derived through love, begins by accepting one form of God as his chosen ideal, as Ramakrishna the Divine Mother. For a long time he is absorbed in this one love. At first he cannot attain the object of his devotion, but gradually he comes to see, touch and converse with it. From that moment the slightest concentration is enough to make him feel the living presence of his Lord. As he believes that his Lord is in everything, in all forms, he soon begins to perceive other forms of Gods emanating from his own Beloved. This divine polymorphism peoples his vision. Eventually he is so filled with its music that there is no room in him for anything else, and the material world disappears. This is called the *Savikala Samadhi*—or state of superconscious ecstasy, wherein the spirit still clings to the inner world of thought, and enjoys the sentiment of its own life with

God. But when one idea has taken possession of the soul, all other ideas fade and die away, and his soul is very near its final end, the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—the final union with Brahman. It is not far to that cessation of thought wherein at last absolute Unity is realised by complete renunciation.[11] Ramakrishna had travelled along three quarters of this spiritual pilgrimage as a blind man.[12] The *Bhairavi,* whom he adopted as his spiritual mother, as his *Guru* or teacher, showed him all its phases and their import. Having herself practised religious exercises, she was conversant with the roads of knowledge, and so she made him try all the roads of the Sadhana in turn and methodically according to the rules of the Holy Books,—even the most dangerous ones, the *Tantras,* which expose the sense and spirit to all the disturbances of the flesh and the imagination, so that these may be overcome. But the path skirts the precipices of degradation and madness, and more than one who has ventured upon it has never returned.[13] Ramakrishna the pure, however, came back as pure as he started out, and tempered as steel.

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[11] I am still depending for this explanation on the treatise of Sw. Saradananda. (Cf. Ruysbroeck: *De ornatu spiritalium nuptiarum:* "Go forth! It is God who speaks. . . . He speaks through the darkness to the spirit and the spirit sinks and slips away. It must lose itself in the sacred gloom, where bliss delivers man from himself, so that he never finds himself again according to human ideas. In the abyss where love gives the fire of death, I see the dawn of eternal life. . . . By the virtue of this immense love we possess the joy of dying to ourselves and of bursting from our prison house, to be lost in the ocean of the Essence and in the burning darkness." III. 1. 2. and 4. and *passim,* trans. Ernest Hello.)

[12] But his nature had held him back on the last mile of the way, at the cross roads where man takes leave of the personal God and of his love. His spiritual mother, the *Bhairavi,* did not try to urge him beyond them. They both instinctively shrank from the blind vision, from the last abyss, the Impersonal.

He was now in possession of all forms of union with God by love—"the nineteen attitudes," or different emotions of the soul in the presence of its Lord, such as the relations of a servant and his master, a son and his mother, a friend, a lover, a husband, etc. He had invested all sides of the Divine citadel; and the man who had conquered God partook of His nature.

His initiator recognised in him an Incarnation of the Divinity. She accordingly called a meeting at Dakshineswar and after learned discussion by the *Pandits,* the *Bhairavi* insisted that the theological authorities should give public recognition to the new *Avatara.*

Then his fame began to spread. People came from afar to see the wonderful man, who had succeeded, not only in one *Sadhana,* but in all. The ascetics, who by one road or another were straining towards God—monks, sages, *Sadhus,* visionaries—all came to seek his advice and to be instructed by him, who now sat at the crossroads and dominated them. Their accounts speak of the fascination produced by the appearance of the man who had come back—not, as Dante, from Hell—but as a pearl-fisher from the deep sea—of the golden radiance of his body burnt and purified so long in the fires of ecstasy.[14] But to the end of his life he remained the most simple of men without a trace of pride; for he was too intoxicated with God to consider himself, and was preoccupied much less with what he had already achieved than with what was still to do. He disliked all mention of his being an *Avatara,* and when he had arrived at the point that everybody else, even the *Bhairavi,* his guide, took to be the summit, he looked up to the rest of the ascent, the last steep arête. And he was obliged to climb to the very top.

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[13] The greatest Hindu thinker of today, Aurobindo Ghose, of whom I shall speak in the second volume of this work, has rehabilitated the way of *Tantra,* which had become discredited on account of the licentious misuse of certain of its methods. While castigating these, he has vindicated its original sense, and he has shown its grandeur. Contrary to the other Vedic *Yoga* whose Lord is the *Purusha* (the conscious soul) and Knowledge the aim, the Lord of the Tantra is *Prakriti* (Energy, the soul of Nature) and its end the fullness of possession. Instead of fleeing from Nature, the Tantra faces and seizes her. It is Dionysias as opposed to Appolyon. It is of some importance to note that Ramakrishna, alone of all Indian *Yogin* united in himself the two complementary aspects.

But for this last ascent the old guides were not sufficient. And so his spiritual mother, who had jealously cherished him for three years, had, like so many other mothers, the pain of seeing her son, once dependent on her milk, escape her to follow a higher command from another master with a sterner and more virile voice.

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Towards the end of 1854 just at the moment when Ramakrishma had achieved his conquest of the personal God, the messenger of the impersonal God, ignorant as yet of his mission, arrived at Dakshineswar. This was Tota Puri (the naked man)—an extraordinary Vedantic ascetic, a wandering monk, who had reached the ultimate revelation after forty years of preparation—a liberated soul, who looked with impersonal gaze upon the phanton of this world with complete indifference.

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[14] The *Yogins* of India constantly note this effect of the great ecstasy caused by an afflux of blood. As we shall see later, Ramakrishna could tell as soon as he saw the breast of a religious man, whom he was visiting, whether or no he had passed through the fire of God.

For a long time Ramakrishna, not without anguish, had felt prowling round him the formless God and the inhuman, the superhuman indifference of His *Missi Dominici*—those *Paramahamsas* from the rarified heights, detached for ever from all things, terrible ascetics denuded of body and spirit, despoiled of the heart's last treasure: the diamond of love of the divine. During the early days of his stay at Dakshineswar he had felt the terrible fascination of these living corpses; and he had wept with terror at the idea that he too might have to come to a similar condition. Imagine what it must have cost a nature, such as I have described that of this madman of love, this born lover and artist. He needed to see, to touch, to consume the object of his love, and he remained unsatisfied until he had embraced the living form, had bathed in it as in a river, and had espoused the divine mould and all its beauties. Such a man was to be forced to abandon the home of his heart and sink body and soul in the formless and the abstract! Such a train of thought must have been more painful and more alien to his nature than it would be to one of our Western scientists.

But he could not escape it. His very terror fascinated him like the eyes of a snake. Dizzy though he was at the contemplation of the heights, he who had reached the peaks was obliged to go on to the very end. The explorer of the continent of the Gods could not stop until he had reached the source of the mysterious Nile.

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[15] It is a remarkable fact that Ramakrishna, though highly gifted for poetry and the arts, had no taste for mathematics. Vivekananda's mind was of a different order. Though not less artistic he knew and loved the sciences.

I have said already that the formless God lay in wait for him with all his terror and attraction. But Ramakrishna did not go to Him. Tota Puri came to fetch the lover of Kali.

He saw him first without being seen as he was passing by; for he could not stay longer than three days in one place. Seated on one of the steps of the temple, the young priest,[16] was lost in the happiness of his hidden vision. Tota Puri was struck by it.

"My son," he said, "I see that you have already travelled far along the way of truth. If you so wish it, I can help you to reach the next stage. I will teach you the *Vedanta*."

Ramakrishna, with an innocent simplicity that made even the stern ascetic smile, replied that he must first ask leave of the Mother (Kali). She gave Her permission, and he then put himself with humble and complete confidence under the guidance of his divine teacher.

But first he had to submit to the test of "Initiation." The first condition was to renounce all his privileges and insignia, the Brahmin cord and the dignity of priest. These things were nothing to him; but he had also to renounce his affections and the illusions whereby he had hitherto lived—the personal God and the entire harvest of the fruit of his love and sacrifice here and elsewhere, now and for ever. Naked as the earth he had symbolically to conduct his own funeral service. He had to bury the last remains of his ego—his heart. Then only could he reclothe himself in the saffron robe of a *Sannyasin,* the emblem of his new life. Tota Puri now began to teach him the cardinal virtues of the

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[16] He was then twenty-eight years old.

Advaita Vedanta,[17] the Brahman one and undifferentiated, and how to dive deep in search of the ego, so that its identity with *Brahman* might be realised and that it might be firmly established in Him through *Samadhi* (ecstasy).

It would be a mistake to think that it was easy even for one who had gone through all the other stages of ecstasy, to find the key to the narrow door leading to the last. His own account deserves to be reproduced, for it belongs not only to the sacred texts of India, but to the Archives of the West, wherein are preserved all the documents relating to the revelations of the science of the Spirit.

"The naked man, Tota Puri, taught me to detach my mind from all objects and to plunge it into the heart of the *Atman.* But despite all my efforts, I could not cross the realm of name and form and lead my spirit to the Unconditional state. I had no difficulty in detaching my mind from all objects with the one exception of the too familiar form of the radiant Mother,[18] the essence of pure knowledge, who appeared before me as a living reality. She barred the way to the beyond. I tried on several occasions to concentrate my mind on the precepts of the *Adviata Vedanta;* but each time the form of the Mother intervened. I said to Tota Puri in despair, 'It is no good. I shall never succeed in lifting my spirit to the "unconditional" state and find myself face to face with the Atman.' He replied severely, 'What! You say you cannot? You must!' Looking about him, he found a piece of glass. He took it and stuck the point between my eyes, saying, 'Concentrate your mind on that point.' Then I began to meditate with all my might, and as soon as the gracious form of the Divine Mother appeared, I used my discrimination as a sword,[19] and I clove Her in two. The last barrier fell and my spirit immediately precipitated itself beyond the plane of 'conditional' things, and I lost myself in the *Samadhi.*"

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[17] The Advaita "without second" is the strictest and most abstract form of the Vedanta. It first appeared in the IXth century A.D., and its most famous exponent in the XIth century—Sankara, of whom I shall have more to say later. It was absolute Non-Dualism. Nothing but one unique Reality existed to the exclusion of every other. Its name was immaterial, God, the Infinite, the Absolute, Brahman-Atman, etc.: for this Reality did not possess a single attribute to assist in its definition. To every attempt at definition Sankara, like Denis the Areopagite, had only one answer—"No! No!" Everything which has the appearance of existence, the world of our mind and senses, is nothing but the Absolute under a false conception *(Avidya).* Under the influence of Avidya, which Sankara and his school found it very difficult to explain clearly, Brahman adopts names and forms, which are nothing but non-existence. The only existence beneath this flood of "ego" phantoms is the true Self, the *Paramatman,* the One. Good works are powerless to help in its realisation, although they perhaps help to bring about a propitious atmosphere from whence Consciousness may emerge. But Consciousness alone and direct can deliver and save the soul *(Mukti).* Hence the **γνῶθι σεαυτον** (Know thyself) of the Greeks, is opposed, as has been shown, to the *"See the Self and be the Self"* of the great Indian Vedantists. . . . *Tat tvam asi (Thou art that).*

The door of the Inaccessible was only forced with great strain and infinite suffering. But hardly had Ramakrishna crossed the threshold than he attained the last stage—the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—wherein subject and object alike disappeared.

"The Universe was extinguished. Space itself was no more. At first the shadows of ideas floated in the obscure depths of the mind. Monotonously a feeble consciousness of the Ego went on ticking. Then that stopped too. Nothing remained but Existence. The soul was lost in Self. Dualism was blotted out. Finite and Infinite space were as one. Beyond word, beyond thought, he attained *Brahman*."

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[18] Always Kali, the Beloved.

[19] This is not a case of the clumsy auto-hypnotism of the hen, who falls into a catalepsy along a chalk line in the sun (thus I read the disrespectful thought of my Western reader). The action of mind described by Ramakrishna was an effort of severe concentration, which excluded nothing, but which involved keen and critical analysis.

In one day he had realised what it had taken Tota Puri forty years to attain. The ascetic was astounded by the experience he had provoked, and regarded with awe the body of Ramakrishna, rigid as a corpse for days on end, radiating the sovereign serenity of the spirit, which has reached the end of all knowledge.

Tota Puri ought only to have stayed three days. He remained eleven months for intercourse with the disciple who had outstripped his master. Their parts were now reversed. The young bird came down from a higher region of the sky, whence he had seen beyond the loftiest circle of hills. His dilated pupils carried a wider vision than the sharp narrow eyes of the old "naga." [20] The eagle taught the serpent in his turn.

This did not come about without considerable opposition.

Let us put the two seers face to face.

Ramakrishna was a small brown man with a short beard and beautiful eyes, "long dark eyes, full of light, obliquely set and slightly veiled,[21] never very wide open, but seeing half-closed a great distance both outwardly and inwardly. His mouth was half open over his white teeth in a bewitching smile,[22] at once affectionate and mischievous. Of medium height, he was thin to emaciation and extremely delicate.[23] His temperament was exceptionally highly strung, for he was super-sensitive to all the winds of joy and sorrow, both moral and physical. He was indeed a living reflection of all that happened before the mirror of his eyes, a two-sided mirror turned both out and in. His unique plastic power allowed his spirit instantaneously to shape itself according to that of others without, however, losing its own *feste Burg*,[24] the immutable and infinite centre of endless nobility. "His speech was Bengali of a homely kind . . . with a slight though delightful stammer; but his words held men enthralled by the wealth of spiritual experience, the inexhaustible store of simile and metaphor, the unequalled powers of observation, the bright and subtle humour, the wonderful catholicity of sympathy and the ceaseless flow of wisdom.[25]

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[20] The name of the sect to which Tota Puri belonged. *Naga* also means snake.

[21] Mukerji.

[22] Mahendra Nath Gupta.

Facing this Ganges with its depths and its reflections, its liquid surface and its currents, its windings and meanders and the millions of beings it bore and nourished, the other rose like the Rock of Gibraltar. He was very tall and robust, with magnificent physique, resolute and indestructible—a rock with the profile of a lion. His constitution and mind were of iron. He had never known illness or suffering, and regarded them with smiling contempt. He was the strong leader of men. Before adopting a wandering life he had been the sovereign head of a monastery of seven hundred monks in the Punjab. He was a master of disciplinary method which petrified as argil the flesh and the spirit of men.[26] It never entered his head that anything could check his sovereign will—passion, danger, the storms of the senses, or the magic force of Divine Illusion, which raises the tumultous waves of existence. To him *Maya* was something non-existent, a void, a lie, which only required to be denounced to vanish for ever. To Ramakrishna *Maya* itself was God, for everything was God. It too was one face of *Brahman.* Moreover when he had reached the summit after the stormy ascent, Ramakrishna forgot nothing of the anguish, the transports, the accidents of the climb. The most insignificant pictures of his journey remained in his memory, registered according to their kind, each in its own time and place in the wonderful panorama of peaks. But what was there for the "naked man" to store up in his memory? His mind was like himself, void of emotions and loves—"a brain of porphyry," as an Italian described the greatest painter of Umbria.[27] This marble tablet needed to be carved by the chisel of fruitful suffering; and so it came about.

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[23] In the journeys he took afterwards with Mathur Babu he became tired at once. He could not walk and had to be carried.

[24] That is from the moment when he had succeeded in uniting all the threads of the groups of forms and destinies in their centre, *Brahman*. Until then he had been taken by each in turn.

[25] The last touches of this portrait are taken from the memory of an eyewitness still living, Magendranath Gupta. (Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata* March 1927, and *The Modern Review,* May 1927).

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[26] The educational psycho-physiology of our day should interest itself in the methods used in the exercise of meditation; first comfortable seats, then harder and harder ones, then the bare ground, while at the same time clothing and food are gradually reduced until a state of nakedness and extreme privation is reached. After this initiation the novices are scattered to wander through the country, first with companions and then alone until the last ties binding them to the outside world have been completely severed.

[27] Pietro Perugino, the master of Raphael. The judgment is Vasari's.

In spite of his great intellect, he did not understand that love could be one of the paths leading to God. He challenged the experience of Ramakrishna and poured scorn on prayers said aloud, and on all external manifestations, such as music, hymns and religious dances. When he saw Ramakrishna at the close of the day beginning his repetition of the names of God to the accompaniment of clapping of hands, he asked with a derisive smile, "Are you making bread?"

But in spite of himself the charm began to work within him. Certain hymns sung in his companion's melodious voice moved him, so that hidden tears came into his eyes. The insidious and enervating climate of Bengal also affected this Punjabi, although he tried to ignore it. His relaxed energy could no longer keep such rigorous control over his emotions. There are contradictions, often unobserved by their owners, even in the strongest minds. This scorner of cults had the weakness to adore a symbol in the shape of fire; for he always kept a lighted one near him. One day a servant came to remove some brands, and Tota Puri protested against such disrespect. Ramakrishna laughed, as only he knew how to laugh, with the gaiety of a child.

"Look, look," he cried. "You also have succumbed to the irresistible power of *Maya!*"

Tota Puri was dumbfounded. Had he really submitted to the yoke of Illusion without being aware of it? Illness too made his proud spirit realise its limitations. Several months in Bengal brought on a violent attack of dysentery. He ought to have gone away but this would have been running away from evil and sorrow. He grew obstinate. "I will not give in to my body!" The trouble increased, and his spirit could no longer abstract itself. He submitted to treatment, but it was of no avail. The sickness grew more virulent with every dawn like a shadow gradually overcasting the day, and became so overwhelming that the ascetic could no longer concentrate his mind on *Brahman*. He was roused to fury by this evidence of decay, by his body, and went down to the Ganges to sacrifice it. But an invisible hand restrained him. When he had entered the stream he had no longer either the will or the power to drown himself. He came back utterly dismayed. He had experienced the power of *Maya*. It existed everywhere, in life, in death, in the heart of pain, the Divine Mother! He passed the night alone in meditation. When morning dawned he was a changed man. He acknowledged before Ramakrishna that *Brahman* and *Shakti*[28] or *Maya* are one and the same Being. The Divine Mother was appeased and delivered him from his illness. He bade farewell to the disciple who had become his master, and went on his way, an enlightened man.[29]

Afterwards Ramakrishna summed up in these words the double experience of Tota Puri.

"When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive, neither creating, nor preserving, nor destroying, I call him *Brahman* or *Purusha*, the impersonal God. When I think of Him as active, creating, preserving, destroying, I call Him *Shakti* or *Maya* or *Prakiti*,[30] the personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The personal and the impersonal are the same Being, in the same way as milk and its whiteness, or the diamond and its lustre, or the serpent and its undulations. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. The Divine Mother and *Brahman* are one." [31]

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[28] *Shakti* means Divine Energy, the radiance of *Brahman*.

[29] The departure of Tota Puri took place towards the end of 1865. It is possible that it was he, who gave to the son of Khudiram the famous name of Ramakrishna that he bears today, when he initiated him as a Sannyasin. (Cf. Saradananda: *Sadhaka Bhava*, p. 285. Note I.)

[30] *Prakriti* is "Energy, the Soul of Nature, the power of the will to act in the Universe." (Definition of Aurobindo Ghose, who puts it in opposition to the "silent and inactive *Purusha*.")

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[31] Compare this text with another, less known but still more striking, showing what should be our judgment of the impassioned cult of Ramakrishna for Kali, and the profound sense of Unity underlying this apparent idolatry.

"Kali is none other than He whom you call *Brahman.* Kali is Primitive Energy *(Shakti).* When it is inactive we call it *Brahman;* (literally: we call That . . .). But when it has the function of creating, preserving or destroying, we call That *Shakti* or Kali. He whom you call *Brahman,* She whom I call Kali, are no more different from each other than fire and its action of burning. If you think of the one, you automatically think of the other. To accept Kali is to accept *Brahman.* To accept *Brahman* is to accept Kali. *Brahman* and His power are identical. That is what I call *Shakti* or Kali."

(Conversations of Ramakrishna with Naren (Vivekananda) and Mahendra Nath Gupta, on the subject of the theories of Sankara and of Ramanuja—published in the *Vedanta Kesari,* November 1916.)

IV

IDENTITY WITH THE ABSOLUTE

THIS great thought was by no means new. The spirit of India had been nourished upon it for centuries and in their course it had been constantly moulded, kneaded, and rolled out by Vedantic philosophy. It had been the subject of interminable discussions between the two great Vedantic schools, that of *Sankara*—the pure *Advaita* school—and the *Ramanuja* or *Visistadviata* school (qualified monism).[1] The first, the absolute non-Dualist, considers the Universe unreal and the Absolute the only reality; the second,

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[1] It is impossible to give here a full explanation of the deep and often complicated system of Vedantic metaphysics. But it may be useful to give a brief summary of the two principal systems.

Sankara, the greatest name in Indian philosophy, lived in the second half of the VIIIth century A.D. He was the genius of the Brahmanic spirit working in antagonism to the Buddhist, although it was not free from traces of the latter. He professed absolute Monism, the unique reality of Brahman-Atman, the "without second" (Advaita), the only Substance, one can hardly say the only Cause, since its apparent effects—the visible world and individual souls—are nothing but phenomenal illusory modifications. It is useless to seek, as do the Buddhists, for the conquest of the Absolute in stages, since all motion of the individual spirit is equal to zero. It is in one movement that the veil can and ought to fall in order to allow the Unity to shine forth. Formidable though this abyss of the One is, wherein the world disappears, it has had an unparallelled fascination for the spirit of India, whose mirror is Sankara.

But only a select band of thinkers can fully realise this Himalayan ideal of an impersonal Absolute. The individual soul yearns to vindicate its reality. After the undivided triumph of the teaching of Sankara throughout the IXth and Xth centuries, religious relatively non-Dualist, recognises Brahman as the only reality, but gives to the world of appearances, to individual souls, the value of modifications or modes which are not illusory, but are radiant with the attributes of Brahman. Such are thought and energy, which sow the seed of living multiplicity.[2] These two schools

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revolt raised its standard in the XIth century in the Tamil. It spread to Kashmir and thence to Southern India, where it found an undisputed leader in Ramanuja, the pontiff or saint *(Alvar)* of the patriarchal chair of Srirangam in Trichinopoly during the XIIth century. (see Note a) Without breaking with the Monism of Sankara, he reinstated humanity. He took as his text the great words of Krishna from the *Bhagadvadgita:*

"Just as My servant cannot live without Me, his supreme end, I cannot live without him. For in truth he is My own Self."

He affirmed that if there is identity between God and the individual soul, which is nothing but a manifestation, the manifestation is none the less real and necessary to God, just as God is necessary to it. This founded at one stroke the famous method of *Bhakti*—the unending communion of love between the soul and God, which was to intoxicate India for centuries. Bengal became particularly possessed with it after one of Ramanuja's disciples, Ramananda, had taken the Holy Word to Benares in the XIVth century and preached it in the vernacular to men of all castes and of all religions. The great Kabir, the Mohammedan weaver poet, whose songs Rabindranath Tagore has revived for Europe the disciple of Ramananda. And from him stretches the unbroken chain of mystic thinkers and poets through Tulsi Dal and Chaitanya to Ramakrishna himself. The keynote of Ramananda,

"Whoever worships God is of God,"

might be written over the doctrine of the Ramakrishna *Maths* (monasteries).

(Cf. Paul Masson-Oursel: *Outline of the History of the Indian Philosophy,* 1923, and K. M. Panikkar: *The Religious Movement in India during the Middle Ages,* in the *Feuilles de l'Inde,* Paris 1928).

Note a. I have adopted the date given by K. M. Panikkar. Paul Masson-Oursel makes the pontificate of Ramanuja come in the XIIth century.

[2] Thus was formed a ladder of Nature *Naturant,* perpetually in motion and increasing in a latent power of ascending, wherein Max Müller and after him Vivekananda have recognised the origin of the doctrine of evolution.

tolerate each other, the extremists of the first looking with scornful indulgence upon the second, for having adopted a transitory compromise as a sop to human weakness or as a crutch to lean upon during the tottering ascent. The crucial point has always been the definition of "phenomenal" Illusion, the essence of *Maya*. Was it to be considered relative or absolute? Sankara himself did not attempt to define Maya. He only said that Illusion existed and that the aim of the Advaita philosophy was to annihilate it. On the other hand the object of the "qualified" Advaitists, such as Ramanuja, was to make use of it in some way for the evolution of individual souls.

What then was the exact position of Ramakrishna between the two schools? The warm plasticity of his nature inclined him rather to the conciliatory solution of Ramanuja. But on the other hand, the intensity of his faith made him subscribe to the most extreme conception of the Absolute. His genius discovered the most vivid expressions, the most ingenious parables to affirm, not only the impossibility of explaining It, but even of approaching It through the understanding. He imported an almost physical contact with the "unconditional Being," with the Sun of whom Sankara said, when replying to the objection that the purely intellectual Absolute was impossible apart from the objects of the intellect, "the sun shines even without objects to shine upon." But there is a difference in the expressions used by Ramakrishna. He had much too keen a vision to be able to pass by the "objects to shine upon" even when he denied their existence. He said of his Sun that It alone shone alike on the evil and on the good—that It was the light of a lamp whereby one man might read the Holy Scriptures and another might commit a forgery—that It was the sugar mountain which the ants, when replete, imagined that they had carried away whereas they had only nibbled a few crumbs—that It was the sea at whose edge the salt doll leaned to measure the depth, but from the moment her foot touched the water, she melted, she was lost, she disappeared.[3] "The unconditioned Being" is something that we cannot grasp. It eludes us, but that does not mean that we do not exist. It illumines our efforts, our ignorance, our wisdom, our good and our evil deeds, we nibble at Its outer shell, but there is a point of fusion when It takes us again into Its great mouth and absorbs us into Itself. But before that point of fusion is reached where was the salt doll? Where do the ants come from? In the case of the worker under the lamp, saintly hermit or forger, where is his home, where is the object he reads and his eyesight itself?

Ramakrishna tells us that even the inspired Holy Scriptures have all been more or less defiled because they have passed through human mouths. But is the defilement real? (For it presupposes the purity, the Brahman). Where do the lips and the mouth exist, which have eaten some portions of Divine food?

The "Differentiated," although it is "without attachments," must then be some part of the "Undifferentiated"—especially since "attachment" in the last resort, "union between the 'Undifferentiated' and the 'Differentiated' is, to use Ramakrishna's own words, 'the real object of the Vedanta.' "[4]

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[3] "Once upon a time there was a salt doll. She came down to the sea with the intention of measuring its depth, and she held a sounding rod in her hand. When she arrived at the edge of the water, she looked at the mighty ocean. Up to that point she had been a salt doll, but if she had taken one step forward, if she had put one foot into the Sea, she would have become merged in the Ocean. The salt doll would never have been able to come back to us to tell us the depth of the Ocean." *(The Gospel of Ramakrishna.)*

In fact Ramakrishna[5] distinguishes two distinct planes and stages of vision: that under the sign of Maya, which creates the reality of the "differentiated" universe, and the super-vision of perfect contemplation (*Samadhi*) wherein one instant's contact with the Infinite is sufficient to make the Illusion of all "differentiated" egos, our own and other men's, disappear immediately. But Ramakrishna expressly maintains that it is absurd to pretend that the world is unreal so long as we form part of it, and receive from it for the maintenance of our own identity, the unquenchable conviction (although hidden in our own lantern) of its reality. Even the saint who comes down from *Samadhi* (ecstasy) to the plane of ordinary life is forced to return to the envelope of his "differentiated" ego, however attenuated and purified. He is flung back into the world of relativity. "So far as his ego is relatively real to him, so far will this world also be real; but when his ego has been purified, he sees the whole world of phenomena as the manifold manifestation of the Absolute to the senses."

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[4] It is to be noted in passing how the metaphysics of the Advaitic Absolute are akin to the doctrines of the pre-Socratian Greeks—to the doctrine of the "Indeterminate" of Anaximander of Ionia for instance, wherein he laid down that all things have been produced by separation—to the doctrine of the One without Second of Xenophanes and the Eleates, who exclude all movement, all change, all future, all multiplicity as nothing but Illusion. There is much research still to be done before the unbroken chain of thought linking the first pioneers of Hellenic philosophy to those of India is re-established.

[5] For this I rely upon the Interviews of 1882, when he was near the end of his life and which therefore contain the essence of his thought.

Maya will then appear under its true colours, at once truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance (Vidya and Avidya), everything that leads to God, and everything that does not lead to Him. *Therefore it is.*

And his assertion has the personal value of a St. Thomas the Apostle, who has both seen and touched, when he bears witness to these *Vijnanis,* these men of super-knowledge who win the privilege of "realising" in this life the personal and the impersonal God—for he was one himself.

They have seen God both outwardly and inwardly. He has revealed Himself to them. The personal God has told them, "I am the Absolute. I am the origin of 'differentiation.'" In the essence of Divine Energy radiating from the Absolute they have perceived the very principle differentiating the supreme Atman and the universe, that which is alike in the Absolute God and in Maya. Maya, Shakti, Prakriti, Nature is no Illusion. To the purified ego She is the manifestation of the supreme Atman, the august sower of living souls and of the universe.

From that moment everything became plain. The visionary hurled back from the gulf on fire with Brahman, discovered with rapture that on the brink the Divine Mother, his Beloved, was awaiting him. And he saw Her now with new eyes, for he had grasped her deep significance, Her identity with the Absolute. She was the Absolute, manifesting Herself to men, the Impersonal made man—or rather woman.[6] She was the source of all Incarnations, the Divine Intercessor between the Infinite and the finite.[7]

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[6] In India the personal God is conceived also as a female principle: Prakriti, Shakti.

Then Ramakrishna intoned the Canticle of the Divine Mother.

"Yea! My Divine Mother is none other than the Absolute. She is at the same time the One and the Many, and beyond the One and the Many. My Divine Mother says, 'I am the Mother of the Universe, I am the Brahman of the Vedanta, I am the Atman of the Upanishads. It is I, Brahman, who created differentiation. Good and bad works alike obey me. The Law of Karma[8] in truth exists; but it is I, who am the Lawgiver. It is I who make and unmake laws. I order all Karma, good and bad. Come to Me! Either through Love (Bhakti), through Knowledge (Jnana) or through Action (Karma), for all lead to God. I will lead you through this world, the Ocean of action. And if you wish it, I will give you the knowledge of the Absolute as well. You cannot escape from Me. Even those who have realised the Absolute in *Samadhi* return to Me at My will.' My Divine Mother is the primordial Divine Energy. She is omnipresent. She is both the outside and the inside of visible phenomena. She is the parent of the world, and the world carries Her in its heart. She is the Spider and the world is the web She has spun. The Spider draws the thread out of Herself and then winds it round Herself. My Mother is at the same time the container and the contained.[9] She is the shell, but She is also the kernel."

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[7] Compare the part of the Son in Christian mysticism.

"Effulgence of my glory, Son Beloved, (It is God who speaks)
Son, in whose face invisible is beheld
Visibly, what by Deity I am,
And in whose hand what by decree I do,
Second Omnipotence! . . ."

(Milton, *Paradise Lost,* VI. 680.)

This might have been said by Ramakrishna with the exception perhaps of the word "second," which makes the expression subordinate to the Supreme Will creating it. But both of them are the same Omnipotence. The God of Milton, like the Brahman of Ramakrishna, being the Absolute, not manifest, could not act; He wished and it was the Son who was the Creator God, the acting God (as was the Mother in the case of Ramakrishna). The Son is the Word, He speaks, He dies, He is born, He is made manifest. The Absolute is the invisible God.

"Fountain of light, Thyself invisible. . . ."

(*Paradise Lost,* III, 374.)

He is impalpable and inconceivable. He is immovable and nevertheless omnipresent; for he is in all things:

"The Filial Power arrived, and sat him down
With his great Father; for he also went
Invisible, yet stayed (such privilege
Hath Omnipresence) . . ."

(*Paradise Lost,* VII, 588.)

(Cf. Denis Saurat: *Milton and Material Christianity in England,* 1928.) The similarity of the mysticisms is obvious and natural. Both had their origin in the East, and both came from the same human brain with its limited operation.

The elements of this ardent Credo are borrowed from the ancient sources of India. Ramakrishna and his followers never claimed that the thought was new.[10] The Master's genius was of another order. He roused from legarthy the Gods slumbering in thought and made them incarnate. He awoke the springs in the

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[8] Action—the generating power of successive existences.

[9] *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* according to M., a son of the Lord and a disciple. (In the Life of Vivekananda, last edition, 1922-24.)

[10] On the contrary their tendency was to deny the fact, even when they might have claimed originality. The great religious minds of modern India, and, I believe, of all other countries, have this in common, that their very power lies in the assurance that their truth is a very ancient one, and eternal verity, *the* Verity. Dayananda, the stern founder of the Arya Samaj, was very angry if new ideas were attributed to him.

"sleeping wood" [11] and warmed them with the heat of his magic personality. And so this ardent Credo is his own in its accent and its transport, in its rhythm and melody, in its song of passionate love.[12]

Listen closely to it, for it is a magnificent song, illimitable and yet harmonious. It is not confined within the form of any poetic measure, but it falls of itself into an ordered beauty and delight. Adoration of the Absolute is united without effort to the passionate love of Maya. Let us keep in our ears its cry of love until we can measure its depth later by listening to Vivekananda. The great fighter, caught in the toils of Maya, tried to break them, and he and she were constantly at war. Such a state was completely foreign to Ramakrishna. He was at war with nothing. He loved his enemy as a lover, and nothing could resist his charm. His enemy ended by loving him. Maya enfolded him in Her arms. Their lips met. Armide had found her Renaud.[13] The Circe who bewitched crowds of other suitors became for him the Ariadne who led Theseus by the hand through the mazes of the labyrinth. Illusion, the all-powerful, who hoods the eyes of the falcon, unhooded Ramakrishna's and threw him from Her wrist into the wide regions of the air. Maya is the Mother [14] who reveals Herself to Her children through the various forms of Her splendour and by Divine Incarnations. With Her love, with the fire of Her heart (Bhakti) She moulds the sheath of the ego so well that it becomes no more than "something that has length but no breadth," a line, a point, which melts under the magic fingers of this subtle refiner into Brahman.

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[11] An allusion to the title of the well known fairy story, the Sleeping Beauty.

(The French title is: La Belle au Bois Dormant, and its literal translation is: the Beauty in the Sleeping Wood. Translator.)

[12] It must not be forgotten that its poetic and musical elements are in part borrowed from the popular treasures of Bengal. We have seen (p. 6) how his mind had been impregnated with the classical Vaishnavite poets through their adaptations in the *jatras* or popular theatrical representations. He often sung a hymn from the works of Kabir, but his mind was also stored with the works of more recent poets and musicians. (Cf. *The Gospel of Ramakrishna.*) One of the oldest and one for whom he seems to have had a particular affection was Rama Prasad, a poet of the XVIIIth century. Ramakrishna constantly quoted and sang his sacred hymns to the Divine Mother. It was to Prasad that Ramakrishna owed some of his most striking metaphors (that of the flying kite, for example, mentioned later) and some characteristic traits of the Mother (the mischievous twinkle in the corner of Her eye, when She made use of Illusion to bewilder the child She loved).

Among the other poet-musicians mentioned in the *Gospel* I note the names of Kamalakanta, a pandit of the beginning of the XIXth century, a devotee of the Mother; Nareschandra, belonging to the same period, also a devotee of Kali; Kubir, a Bengal Vaishnavite saint of the same epoch, author of popular songs; and among the more recent, Premdas (his real name was Trailokya Sannyal) a disciple of Keshab, author of songs, which often owed their inspiration to the improvisations of Ramakrishna, and Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great dramatist, who became Ramakrishna's disciple, (songs from his plays, *Chaitanya-lila,* Buddha-charita, etc.)

So praised be the fingers and the water! Praised be the face and the veil! All things are God. God is in all things. He is in the shadow as well as in the light. Inspired by the English "Mortalists" of the XVIIth century,[15] Hugo said that the Sun is only the shadow of God.[16] Ramakrishna would have said that the shadow is also light.

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[13] Allusion to the characters of Torquato Tasso's poem, *Jerusalem Unbound.*

[14] Or the "eldest sister." Elsewhere Ramakrishna said to Keshab Chundra Sen, "Maya is created by the Divine Mother, as forming part of her plan of the universe." The Mother plays with the world. The world is Her toy. "She lets slip the flying kite of the soul, held by the string of illusion," (October 1882).

[15] Denis Saurat: *Milton and Christian Materialism in England,* p. 52.

But it is because like all true Indian thinkers he believes in nothing that he has not first "realised" throughout his entire being that his thought has the breath of life. The "conception" of the idea regains with him its plain and carnal meaning. To believe is to embrace, and after the embrace to treasure within oneself the ripening fruit.

When a Ramakrishna has once known the grasp of such truths, they do not remain within him as ideas. They quicken into life; and fertilised by his Credo, they flourish and come to fruition in an orchard of "realisations," no longer abstract and isolated, but clearly defined and having a practical bearing on everyday life for the satisfaction of the hunger of men. He will find the Divine Flesh, which he has tasted and which is the substance of the universe again, the same, at all tables and all religions. And he will share the food of immortality in a Lord's Supper, not with twelve apostles, but with all starving souls—with the universe.

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After the departure of Tota Puri towards the end of 1865 Ramakrishna remained for more than six months within the magic circle, the circle of fire, and prolonged his identity with the Absolute until the limit of physical endurance had been reached. For six months, if such a statement is credible, he remained in a state of cataleptic ecstasy, recalling the descriptions given of the fakirs of old—the body, deserted by the spirit like an empty house, given over to destructive forces. If it had not been for a nephew, who watched over the masterless body and nourished its forces, he would have died.[17] It was impossible to go further in ecstatic union with the "formless." It is, moreover, the extreme period of this long Yogic trance which is likely to puzzle, nay, to irritate my French readers, who are used to treading on firm earth, and have not experienced the shocks of spiritual fires for a long time. Patience for a little while longer! We shall come down from the Mount of Sinai—down among men.

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[16] Cf. Milton, "Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear." (*Paradise Lost,* III. 374.)

Ramakrishna himself recognised afterwards that he had been tempting Providence and that it was a miracle that he had ever returned. He was careful to warn his disciples against submitting to any such test. He even forbade it to Vivekananda, on the ground that it was a form of pleasure forbidden to those noble souls, whose duty it was to sacrifice their own happiness to the service of others.[18] When young Naren [19] importuned him to open to him the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—the terrible door leading to the gulf of the Absolute—Ramakrishna refused with anger, he, who never lost his temper and who was always careful not to hurt the feelings of his beloved son. "Shame on you!" he cried, "I thought you were to be the great banyan tree giving shelter to thousands of tired souls. Instead you are selfishly seeking your own well-being. Let these little things alone, my child. How can you be satisfied with so one-sided an ideal? You might be *all*-sided. Enjoy the Lord in all ways!" (By this he meant both in contemplation and in action, so that he might translate the highest knowledge into the highest service of mankind.)

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[17] It is said that a monk who happened to come to Dakshineswar at that time, seeing him on the point of breathing his last, recalled his escaping life with blows.

The great disciple, Saradananda, the most learned in Hindu metaphysics, and more deeply versed in the intellectual make up of his Master than any who came near Ramakrishna, has described this *Nirvikalpa Samadhi,* this great ecstasy of six months, as a state where the consciousness of the ego disappeared completely, coming back now and again very gently, just veiling the perfect "realisation." According to Saradananda, Ramakrishna would perceive in these moments of semi-consciousness the order of the Cosmic Spirit (or we may style it, the obscure recall and tyranny of the vital force) "which forced him to remain in the Bhavamukha." It said in effect, "Do not lose complete consciousness of the ego, and do not identify theyself with the transcendental Absolute, but realise that the Cosmic ego, wherein are born the infinite modes of the universe, is within thee; at every moment of thy life, see and do good in the world."

And so it was during the descent from this long Samadhi that Ramakrishna came to "realise" his divine mission, not perhaps in a single day or suddenly, but gradually. In any case it would be in the first half of 1866.

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[18] How much more then did he dissuade ordinary men from it; for those whose bed in life is a narrow one, would have been submerged by its torrents to their own hurt and the hurt of the community. The way he cured his Sancho Panza, his young nephew, the faithful and matter of fact Hridoy, and his rich patron, Mathur Babu, of their longing for the forbidden fruits of ecstasy, shows a humour and good sense worthy of Cervantes.

Hridoy, a good soul and devoted to his uncle but of the earth earthy, desired to share his uncle's fame. He thought he had a family right to benefit from the spiritual advantages of Ramakrishna. He had no patience with the latter's disinterestedness. In vain his uncle tried to dissuade him from experimenting in ecstasy. The other persisted, with the result that his brain became completely disordered and he had attacks of convulsions and screaming. "Oh Mother," cried Ramakrishna, "dull the sense of this idiot!" Hridoy fell to the ground and overwhelmed his uncle with reproaches. "What have you done, uncle? I shall never experience these ineffable joys again." Ramakrishna maliciously let him alone to do as he pleased. Hridoy was soon visited by frightful visions and was obliged to ask his uncle to deliver him.

The same experience befell the rich Mathur Babu. He longed for Ramakrishna to procure the Samadhi for him. Ramakrishna refused for a long time, but at last he said, "Very well, so be it, my friend." As a result of the coveted Samadhi, Mathur Babu lost all interest and sense in business. This was more than he had bargained for; he became very anxious, and wished to go no further in the matter, so he besought Ramakrishna to remove ecstasy from him for ever. Ramakrishna smiled and cured him.

[19] Narendranath Dutt, the real name of the man who was afterwards called Vivekananda.

Naren wept, humiliated and heartbroken with the duty of renunciation. He acknowledged that the Master's severity was just, but to the end of his life he carried a sick longing in his heart for the Abysmal God, although he devoted that life with humility, hardihood and courage to the service of man.

But we must remember that at the point we have reached in our story, Ramakrishna had not yet finished his *Lehrjahre,* his apprenticeship. It is also noteworthy that his life's experience was won at his own risk and expense, and not by common experience, as is partly at least the case with most of us.

His recovery was not due to his own merits or his own desire. He said that the Mother recalled him to a sense of his human duties by physical suffering. He was gradually forced back from the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* by a violent attack of dysentery, which lasted for six months.

Both physical and moral suffering attached him to the earth. A monk, who knew him,[20] has said that during the first days of his return from ecstasy to the bosom of identity, he howled with pain when he saw two boatmen quarrelling angrily. He came to identify himself with the sorrows of the whole world, however impure and murderous they might be, until his heart was scored with scars. But he knew that even the differences leading to strife among men are the daughters of the same Mother; that the "Omnipotent Differentiation" is the face of God Himself; that he must love God in all sorts and conditions of men, however antagonistic and hostile, and in all forms of thought controlling their existence and often setting them at variance the one with the other. Above all he must love God *in all their Gods.*

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[20] (Cf. D. G. Mukerji: *The Face of Silence.*)

In short he recognised that all religions lead by different paths to the same God. Hence he was eager to explore them all; for with him comprehension meant existence and action.

V

THE RETURN TO MAN

THE first path to be explored was the religion of Islam. He was hardly convalescent when he started out upon it at the end of 1866.

From his temple he saw many Musulman fakirs passing by; for the large-hearted patron of Dakshineswar, Rani Rasmani, a "nouvelle riche" of a debased caste, in the breath of her piety had desired rooms to be reserved in her foundation for passing guests of all religions. In this way Ramakrishna saw a humble Musulman, Govinda Rai, absorbed in his prayers, and perceived through the outward shell of his prostrate body that this man through Islam had also "realised" God. He asked Govinda Rai to initiate him, and for several days the priest of Kali renounced and forgot his own Gods completely. He did not worship them, he did not even think about Them. He lived outside the temple precincts, he repeated the name of Allah, he wore the robes of a Musulman and was ready—imagine the sacrilege—to eat of forbidden food, even of the sacred animal, the cow! His master and patron, Mathur Babu, was horrified and begged him to desist. In secret he had food prepared for Ramakrishna by a Brahman under the direction of a Musulman in order to save him from defilement. The complete surrender of himself to another realm of thought resulted as always in the spiritual voyage of this passionate artist, in a visual materialisation of the idea. A radiant personage with grave countenance and white beard appeared to him (thus he had probably visualised the prophet). He drew near and lost himself in him. Ramakrishna realised the Musulman God, "the Brahman with attributes." Thence he passed into the "Brahman without attributes." The river of Islam had led him back to the Ocean.

His expositors have later interpreted this experience, following as it did immediately upon his great ecstasy in the Absolute, in a very important sense for India, that Musulmans and Hindus, her enemy sons, can only be reunited on the basis of the Advaita, the formless God. The Ramakrishna Mission has since raised a sanctuary to Him in the depths of the Himalayas, as the corner-stone of the immense and composite edifice of all religions.

Seven years later (I am grouping the facts for the sake of clearness) an experience of the same order led Ramakrishna to "realise" Christianity. Somewhere about November 1874 a certain Mallik, a Hindu of Calcutta, with a garden near Dakshineswar, read the Bible to him. For the first time Ramakrishna met Christ. Shortly afterwards the Word was made flesh. The life of Jesus secretly pervaded him. One day when he was sitting in the room of a friend, a rich Hindu, he saw on the wall a picture representing the Madonna and Child. The figure became alive. Then the expected came to pass according to the invariable order of the spirit; the holy visions came close to him and entered into him so that his whole being was impregnated with them. This time the inflowing was much more powerful than in the case of Islam. It covered his entire soul, breaking down all barriers.

Hindu ideas were swept away. In terror Ramakrishna, struggling in the midst of the waves, cried out, "Oh Mother, what are you doing? Help me!" It was in vain. The tidal race swept everything before it. The spirit of the Hindu was changed. He had no room for anything but Christ. For several days he was filled by Christian thought and Christian love. He no longer thought of going to the temple. Then one afternoon in the grove of Dakshineswar he saw coming towards him a person with beautiful large eyes, a serene regard and a fair skin. Although he did not know who it was, he succumbed to the charm of his unknown guest. He drew near and a voice sang in the depths of Ramakrishna's soul,

"Behold the Christ, who shed his heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of men. It is He, the master Yogin, who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Love incarnate. . . ."

The Son of Man embraced the seer of India, the son of the Mother, and absorbed him into Himself. Ramakrishna was lost in ecstasy. Once again he realised union with Brahman. Then gradually he came down to earth, but from that time he believed in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God.[1] But for him Christ was not the only Incarnation. Buddha and Krishna were others.

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[1] He used the title very sparingly, however. He had a great veneration for saintly men, such as the Tirthankaras (the founders of the Jain religion), and the ten Sikh Gurus, but without believing that they were Incarnations. In his own home amongst his Divine pictures was one of Christ, and he burnt incense before it morning and evening. Later it came to pass that Indian Christians recognised in him a direct manifestation of the Christ and went into ecstasy before him.

At this point I can imagine our uncompromising Christians, body-guards of their one God, raising their eyebrows haughtily, and saying,

"But what did he know of our God? This was a vision, a figment of the imagination. This was too easy, for he knew nothing of the doctrine."

He did in truth know very little, but he was a Bhakta, who believed through love. He did not claim to possess the knowledge of the Jnanins, who believe through the intellect. But when the bow is firmly held, does not each of the two arrows reach the same target? And do not both roads meet for the man who journeys to the very end? Vivekananda, Ramakrishna's great and learned disciple said of him,

"Outwardly he was Bhakta but inwardly Jnanin." [2] At a certain pitch of intensity great love comprehends and great intellect forces the retreats of the heart. Moreover it is surely not for Christians to deny the power of love. It was love that made the humble fishermen of Galilee the chosen disciples of their God and the founders of his Church. And to whom did the risen Christ first appear but to the repentant sinner, whose only claim to the privilege lay in the tears of love wherewith she had washed the feet of Christ and dried them with her hair?

Lastly, knowledge does not consist in the number of books a man has read. In Ramakrishna's India, as in the India of old, culture is largely transmitted orally, and Ramakrishna gained during the course of his life through intercourse with thousands of monks, pilgrims, pandits, and all sorts of men preoccupied with religious problems, an encyclopædic knowledge of religion and religious philosophy,—a knowledge constantly deepened by meditation.[3] "One day a disciple wondering at his knowledge asked him, 'How were you able to master all past knowledge?' And Ramakrishna answered, 'I have not read, I have heard the learned. I have made a garland of their knowledge wearing it round my neck, and I have given it as an offering at the feet of the Mother.' "

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[2] And Vivekananda added, "But with me it is quite the contrary." Another very great religious thinker of India, also a highly intellectual man, more deeply imbued with European thought than any of his contemporaries, Keshab Chunder Sen, had the noble humility to sit at the feet of the Bhakta, whose intuition of heart enlightened for him the spirit underlying the letter.

He could say to his disciples,

"I have practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects. . . . I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once.[4] Wherever I look I see men quarrelling in the name of religion—Hindus, Mohammedans, Brahmans, Vaishnavas and the rest, but they never reflect that He, who is called Krishna is also called Shiva, and bears the name of Primitive Energy, Jesus and Allah as well—the same Rama with a thousand names. The tank has several ghats (flights of steps). At one Hindus draw water in pitchers, and call it *jal;* at another Musulmans draw water in leathern bottles and call it *pani;* at a third Christians and call it *water.* Can we imagine that the water is not *jal,* but only *pani* or *water?* How ridiculous! The substance is One under different names and everyone is seeking the same Substance; nothing but climate, temperament and name vary.[5] Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realise Him."

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[3] Ramakrishna understood Sanskrit though he could not speak it. He said, "In my childhood I could gather all that the Sadhus were reading in the house of a neighboring family, even though it is true that the sense of individual words escaped me. If a pandit spoke in Sanskrit I understood him, but I could not speak it myself." Gospel, II. 17.

[4] *Gospel of Ramakrishna,* II. 17.

The period after 1867 added nothing vital to Ramakrishna's inner store [6] but he learnt to use what he had treasured. His revelations were brought into contact with the outside world and his spiritual conquests were confronted with the achievements of other human experience and he realised more fully the unique prize that had been awarded him. It was during these years that he came to a knowledge of his mission among men and his present duty of action.

He resembles the Little Poor Man of Assisi in many ways, both moral and physical. He too was the tender brother of everything that lives and dies, and had drunk so deep of the milk of loving kindness that he could not be satisfied with a happiness he could not share with others. On the threshold of his deepest ecstasies he prayed to the Mother as She was drawing him to Herself,

"Oh Mother, let me remain in contact with men! Do not make me a dried up ascetic!"

And the Mother, as She drew him back to the shores of life from the depths of the Ocean replied (half consciously he heard Her voice),

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[5] *Ibid.,* II. 248.

[6] Except for his Christian experience, which I have described in the previous pages in its logical place, though it belongs chronologically to the year 1874.

"Stay on the threshold of relative consciousness for the love of humanity."[7]

And so he returned to the world of men and his first experience was a bath of warm and simple humanity. In May 1867, still much enfeebled by the crises he had passed through, he went to rest for six or seven months in his own countryside of Kamarpukur after an absence of eight years.[8] He gave himself up with the joy of a child to the familiar cordiality of the good people of the village, happy at the sight of their little Gandahar, whose strange fame had reached them and made them rather anxious. And these simple peasants were nearer by their very simplicity to the profundity of his beliefs than the doctors of the towns and the devotees of the temples.

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[7] From that time he resisted all temptation to seek an ecstatic death and avoided its dangers. He refused to run the risk of certain dangerous emotions, such as the sight of a holy place, Gaya, in 1868, because it was too full of memories and he knew that he would not be able to bring his spirit back to the plane of ordinary life. He had received the order from within to stay in the world of everyday things in order to help others.

[8] The Bhairavi Brahmani accompanied him, but the experiences of the journey do not rebound to her credit. This eminent woman's character was not equal to her intelligence, and her meditations had not raised her above human weaknesses. Having taught Ramakrishna and revealed him to himself, she claimed proprietory rights over him. She had already suffered from the ascendancy of Tota Puri, and she could not bear to see him reabsorbed in the atmosphere of his birthplace, monopolised by his old companions to whom she was a stranger, without ceremony. Moreover the presence of his young wife, humble and sweet though she was, troubled her and she had not the tact to hide it. After some painful scenes, which did not make her more amiable, she recognised her weakness. She begged Ramakrishna's pardon and left him for ever. He met her again for the last time in Benares, whither she had retired to spend the remainder of her days in a strict search for truth. She died shortly afterwards.

During this visit he learned to know his child wife. Sarada Devi was now fourteen years old. She lived with her parents, but she came to Kamarpukur when she knew her husband had arrived. The spiritual development of the little wife with her pure heart was greater than her age, and she understood at once her husband's mission and the part of pious affection and tender disinterestedness she was to play in it. She recognised him as her guide and put herself at his service.

Ramakrishna has at times been blamed, and very coarsely blamed,[9] for having sacrificed her. She herself never showed any trace of it; she irradiated peace and serenity throughout her life on all who came in contact with her. Moreover, there is a fact, which has never before been revealed except by Vivekananda, that Ramakrishna himself was gravely aware of his responsibility and offered his wife the greatest sacrifice of which he was capable if she demanded it—his mission.

"I have learnt," he said to her, "to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the only idea I can have about you. But if you wish to draw me into the world (of Illusion), as I have been married to you, I am at your service." [10]

Here was something entirely new in the spirit of India. Hindu tradition lays down that a religious life *ipso facto* frees a man from every other obligation. Ramakrishna had more humanity and recognised that his wife had binding rights over him. She was, however, magnanimous enough to renounce them, and encouraged him in his mission. But Vivekananda specifically declares that it was "by consent of his wife" that he was free to follow the life of his choice. Touched by her innocence and self-sacrifice, Ramakrishna took upon himself the part of an elder brother. He devoted himself patiently during the months they were together to her education as a diligent wife and good manager. He had a great deal of practical common sense curiously at variance with his mystic nature. The peasant's son had been brought up in a good school and no detail of domestic or rural life was alien to him. All who knew him remarked on the order and cleanliness of his house, in which respect the Little Poor Man of God might have taught his disciples, drawn though they were from the intellectual and upper middle classes.

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[9] This was especially the case from certain Brahmo Samajists, who were irritated by Ramakrishna's ascendancy over their leader, Keshab Chunder Sen, and they could not forgive him his wide popularity.

[10] Vivekananda: My Master. Vol. IV of his Complete Works, 3rd edition, 1923, p. 169.

He returned to Dakshineswar at the end of 1867, and in the course of the following year made several pilgrimages with Mathur Babu, his patron and the master of his temple. In the early months of 1868 he saw Shiva's city, Benares, and Allahabad at the sacred junction of the Ganges and the Jumna, and Brindaban, the very home of legend and of the Song of Songs, the scene of the *Romancero* pastoral of Krishna. His transports, his intoxication may be imagined. When he crossed the Ganges before Benares, "the city of God" seemed to him not built of stone, but like a heavenly Jerusalem, "a condensed mass of spirituality." On the cremating fields of the holy city he saw Shiva and His white body and tawny matted locks and the Divine Mother bending over the funeral pyres and granting salvation unto the dead. When twilight fell on the banks of the Jumna, he met the herdsmen leading their cattle home, and he was carried away with emotion, and ran shouting, "Krishna! Where is Krishna?"

But if he did not see the God Himself, he met something else in the course of his travels of greater importance and deeper meaning for us of the West—he discovered the face of human suffering. Up to that time he had lived in a state of ecstatic hypnosis within the gilded shell of his sanctuary, and the hair of Kali had hidden it from him. When he arrived at Deoghar with his rich companion, he saw its almost naked inhabitants, the Santhals, emaciated and dying of hunger: for a terrible famine was ravaging the land. He told Mathur Babu that he must feed these unfortunates. Mathur Babu objected that he was not rich enough to support the misery of the whole world. Ramakrishna thereupon sat down among the poor creatures and wept, declaring that he would not move from thence, but would share their fate. Croesus was obliged to submit and to do the will of his poor priest.

During the summer of 1870 Mathur made the mistake of taking him in the course of another journey to one of his estates at the time of the payment of dues. The harvests had failed for two years running and the tenants were reduced to extreme misery. Ramakrishna told Mathur to remit their dues, to distribute help to them and to give them a sumptuous feast. Mathur Babu protested but Ramakrishna was inexorable.

"You are only the steward of the Mother," he said to the rich proprietor. "They are the Mother's tenants. You must spend the Mother's money. When they are suffering, how can you refuse to help them? You must do so."

Mathur Babu had to give in.

These things should not be allowed to fall into oblivion. Swami Shivananda, the present head of the Ramakrishna Order (the Ramakrishna Math and Mission), one of the first apostles and a direct disciple of the Master, has described the following scene, which he saw with his own eyes.

One day at Dakshineswar, while he was in a condition of super-consciousness, Ramakrishna said,

"Maya is Shiva (all living beings are God).[11] Who then dare talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service, for man must be regarded as God!"

Vivekananda was present. When he heard those pregnant words, he said to Shivananda,

"I have heard a great saying to-day. I will proclaim the living truth to the world."

And Swami Shivananda added,

"If anyone asks for the foundation of the innumerable acts of service done by the Ramakrishna Mission since then, he will find it there."[12]

* * *

About this time several deaths left the mark of Sorrow's cruel, yet brotherly fingers upon Ramakrishna.

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[11] On another occasion he said, "God is in all men, but all men are not in God: that is the reason why they suffer." (Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings, I, 297).

[12] Ramakrishna set the example of the most humble service. He, a Brahmin, went to a pariah's house and asked permission to clean it. The pariah, overcome by the proposal, a criminal one in the eyes of an orthodox Hindu, which might have exposed his visitor and himself to the worst reprisals, refused to allow it. So Ramakrishna went to his house at night when all were asleep and wiped the floor with his long hair. He prayed, "Oh Mother, make me the servant of the pariah!" (Vivekananda, *My Master.*)

Though a man lost in God, who regarded departure from this life as a return to endless bliss, he was seen on the occasion of the death of a young friend and nephew to laugh for joy and to sing his deliverance.[13] But the day after his death he was suddenly assailed by the most terrible anguish. His heart was broken, he could hardly breathe and he thought,

"Oh God! Oh God! If it is thus with me, how they must suffer, those who lose their loved ones, their children!"

And the Mother bestowed upon him the duty and the power of administering the balm of faith to mourners.

"Those who did not see it," Swami Shivananda wrote to me, "cannot imagine to what extent this man, so detached from the world, was constantly occupied in listening to the story of their worldly tribulations, poured out to him by men and women alike, and in lightening their burdens. We saw innumerable examples of it, and there may be some householders still living, who call down blessings upon him for his infinite pity and his ardent attempts to relieve the sufferings of men. One day in 1883 Mani Mallick a rich and distinguished old man, lost his son and came to Ramakrishna with a broken heart. He entered so deeply into the old man's sorrow that it almost seemed as if he were the bereaved father, and his sorrow surpassed Mallick's. Some time passed thus. Suddenly Ramakrishna began to sing."

But not an elegy, not a funeral oration. He sang a heroic song, the story of the fight of the soul with death.

"To arms! To arms! Oh Man, death invades thy home in battle array. Get up into the chariot of faith, and arm thyself with the quiver of wisdom. Draw the mighty bow of love and hurl, hurl the divine arrow, the holy name of the Mother!" [14]

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[13] At that moment he had the vision of a sword drawn from the scabbard.

"And," concluded Shivananda, "I remember how the father's grief was assuaged by it. This song gave him back his courage, calmed his sorrow and brought him peace."

As I describe this scene my thoughts go back to our own Beethoven, who without saying a word came and sat down at the piano and consoled a bereaved mother with his music.

This divine communion with living, loving, suffering humanity was to be expressed in a passionate, but pure and pious symbol. When in 1872 his wife came to him at Dakshineswar for the first time,[15] the tenderness of Ramakrishna, a tenderness compounded of religious respect purged of all trace of desire and sensual disturbance, recognised the Goddess under her veil, and he made a solemn avowal of it. One night in May, when everything had been prepared for worship, he made Sarada Devi sit in the seat of Kali, and as a priest he accomplished the ritual ceremonies, the Shorashi Puja,[16] the adoration of womanhood. Both of them were in a condition of semi-conscious or superconscious ecstasy. When he came to himself he hailed his companion as the Divine Mother. In his eyes She was incarnate in the living symbol of immaculate humanity.[17]

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[14] I give a fragment of this song from the *Gospel of Ramakrishna.* The scene was by no means unique. Ramakrishna consoled more than one mourner with more than one song. But its heroic character always remained the same.

In the *Life of Ramakrishna* (pp. 652-653) the account is rather different. Ramakrishna listened to the broken hearted father; he said nothing but passed into a state of semi-consciousness. Suddenly he began to sing the battle hymn with energetic gestures and a radiant face. Then he became normal again and talked affectionately to the unhappy man and consoled him.

D. G. Mukerji also describes the same scene as Swami Shivananda and with his usual art. But he was not an eyewitness, while Shivananda and the author of the *Gospel* were.

[15] She stayed with him from March 1872 to November 1873, from April 1874 to September 1875, again in 1882 and finally in 1884, when she remained with him until the end. The story of her first journey to rejoin her husband, when she was in bad health, and bravely accomplished with much fatigue and no little danger, is one of the most touching chapters in the life of Ramakrishna. (See Note I at the end of the volume—a charming adventure, the meeting of Sarada Devi with the brigands). No less extraordinary was her first stay of twenty months and the common life led by the two mystics, both equally chaste and equally passionate.

* * *

His conception of God, then, was one which grew by degrees, from the idea of the God who is omnipresent and in whom everything is absorbed, like a sun fusing everything in itself, to the warm feeling that all things are God, like so many little suns, in each of which He is present and active. Both, it is true, contain the same idea, but the second reverses the first, so that not only from the highest to the lowest, but from the lowest to the highest, there is a twofold chain joining without a break the one Being to all living Beings. Thus man becomes sacred.

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[16] A Tantric ceremony.

[17] The sole witness of this strange scene was the priest from the neighbouring temple of Vishnu.

Ramakrishna's cult of womanhood did not limit itself to his blameless wife. He recognised the Mother even in the most degraded prostitutes. "I myself have seen this man standing before these women," said Vivekananda, "and falling on his knees at their feet, bathed in tears, saying 'Mother, in one form Thou art in the street and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother. I salute Thee,'" *(My Master)*

Two years before his death, April 5, 1884, he said, "I can now realise the change that has taken place in me. A long time ago Vaishnav Charan told me that when I could see God in man, I should have attained the perfection of knowledge. At the present moment I see that it is He who moves under a diversity of forms—sometimes as a pious man, sometimes as a hypocrite, sometimes even as a criminal. So I say, 'Narayana in the pious man, Narayana in the hypocrite, Narayana in the Criminal and the libertine.' "[18]

I must take up again the course of his life, so that my readers may not lose the thread of the story, and that they may know in advance where the river is bearing despite its immense meanders, and windings, at times seeming to dissipate itself in numerous channels, and at others appearing to turn back on its course.

I take it up again at a point round about 1874 when the full cycle of religious experience had been achieved, and when, as he says himself, he had plucked the three beautiful fruits of the tree of Knowledge—Compassion, Devotion[19] and Renunciation.

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[18] *Life of Ramakrishna,* p. 543. Narayana is a certain aspect of Brahman or Purusha, the supreme Soul, who brings forth gods and men. (Cf. Paul Masson-Oursel: *Outline of the History of Indian Philosophy,* p. 105.)

[19] The word Devotion, the term sanctioned by the European translations of Hindu mysticism, is quite inadequate to express the sentiment of a passionate gift of self implied in it. The true meaning of the old word ought to be revived, as it was used in Christian mysticism, for that gives its exact parallel, viz. Dedication. (Cf. Ruysbroeck, *Of Inward Dedication.*) "If we wish to belong to God through inward dedication, we shall feel in the depth of our wills and in the depth of our love what may be called the welling up of a living spring, which will rise to eternal life." *(De septem custodiis libellus,* trans. E. Hello.)

What Hindu Bhakta is there who will fail to recognise himself in the act of "dedication" described here by the Flemish priest of the XIV century?

During the same period his interviews with the eminent men of Bengal had made him aware of the inadequacy of their knowledge and of the great starving void awaiting him in the soul of India. He never ceased to make use of all the sources within his reach for adding to his knowledge, from the religious or the learned, from the poor or the rich, from wandering pilgrims or pillars of science and society. Personal pride was quite alien to him; he was instead rather inclined to think that each "seeker after truth" had received some special enlightenment, which he himself had missed, and he was anxious to pick up the crumbs that fell from their table. He therefore sought them out wherever they might be found without considering how he might be received.[20]

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[20] I have already pointed out that in his temple he had the daily opportunity of talking to the faithful of all sorts and all sects. From the moment when the Bhairavi Brahmani had announced that he was a man visited of God, that he was perhaps an Incarnation, people came to see him from far and near. Thus between 1868 and 1871 he saw many famous personalities, such as the great Bengali poet, a convert to Christianity, Michael Madhusadan Dutt, and the masters of Vedantic learning like the pandits Narayan Shastri and Padma Lochan. In 1872 he met Visvanath Upadhyaya and Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, of whom I shall speak in the next chapter. It has not been possible for me to ascertain precisely the date of his visit to Devendranath Tagore. The Hindu authorities do not agree upon this point. It cannot have been later than 1869-1870. The Tagores give 1864-1865 as the approximate date. The authorised biographer of Ramakrishna, (Mahendra Nath Gupta) ascribes it to 1863 on the ground that Ramakrishna gave it to be understood that in the course of this visit he saw Keshab Chunder Sen officiating in the pulpit of the Arya Samaj. Keshab was only the minister of the Samaj from 1862 to 1865; and there are several reasons why Ramakrishna could not have made the journey in 1864-5. At all events it was in 1875 that he visited Keshab after he had become the head of the new reformed Brahmo Samaj, and it is from that year that their relations of cordial friendship date.

At this point it is necessary to give the European reader a brief summary of the great movement stirring in the soul of India for the past sixty years. Too little is heard of this mighty reawakening, although the centenary of one of its most memorable dates, the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj was celebrated in India this very year (1928). Humanity as a whole ought to have joined with India to commemorate its genial founder; for despite all obstacles he had the will and the courage to inaugurate cooperation between the East and the West on a basis of equality, and between the forces of reason and the power of faith. He did not understand faith to mean a blind acceptance, as it has degenerated into among downtrodden races, but rather a living and seeing intuition.

I speak of Ram Mohun Roy.[21]

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[21] As a general picture I recommend the recent work of K. T. Paul: *The British Connection with India,* 1927, London, Student Christian Movement, which traces with a sure hand the evolution of the national movement and the Hindu religious movements during the last century. K. T. Paul, an Indian Christian and the friend of Gandhi, a great and impartial mind filled with the thought alike of the East and of the West, unites in this work the historical precision of Europe and its science of facts with the science of the soul, a peculiarly Indian science.

(Çf. the panoramic sketch, which I published in the Paris Review, *Europe,* December 15, 1928, *India in Movement.*)

In its number of October 1928 the Indian Review, *Prabuddha Bharata,* published a very interesting paper of Swami Nikhilananda, which he had previously read in August 1928 to the Convention of Religions at the Centenary of the Brahmo Samaj, on *The Progress of Religion during the last Hundred Years* (in India).

VI

THE BUILDERS OF UNITY, RAM MOHUN ROY, DEVENDRANATH TAGORE, KESHAB CHUNDER SEN, DAYANANDA

RAM MOHUN ROY, an extraordinary man who ushered in a new era in the spiritual history of the ancient continent, was the first really cosmopolitan type in India. During his life of less than sixty years (1774-1833) he assimilated all kinds of thought from the Himalayan myths of ancient Asia to the scientific reason of modern Europe.[1]

He belonged to a great aristocratic Bengal family,[2] bearing the hereditary title of Roy, and he was brought up at the court of the Great Mogul, where the official language was Persian. As a child he learnt Arabic in the Patna schools and read the works of Aristotle and Euclid in that language. Thus besides being an orthodox Brahmin by birth [3] he was nurtured in Islamic culture. He did not discover the works of Hindu theology until he began to study Sanskrit between the ages of fourteen and sixteen at Benares. His Hindu biographers maintain that this was his second birth; but it is quite conceivable that he had no need of the Vedanta to imbibe a monotheistic faith. Contact with Islam would have implanted it in him from infancy, and the sciences and practice of Hindu mysticism only reinforced the indelible influence of Sufism, whose burning breath had impregnated his being from his earliest years.[4]

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[1] For the life and works of this great forerunner, see *Raja Ram Mohun Roy, his Writings and Speeches,* 1925, Natesan, Madras, whose interest is marred by chronological inexactitude; and the excellent pamphlet of Ramananda Chatterjee: *Ram Mohun Roy and Modern India,* 1918, The Modern Review Office, Calcutta. These works are based in part on the biography written by Miss Sophia Dobson Collett, who knew him personally.

(Cf. N. C. Ganguly, fragments of an important volume bearing on Roy, published in September 1928 by The Modern Review of Calcutta in a series entitled *The Builders of India.*)

Manilal C. Parekh: *Rajarshi Ram Mohun Roy,* 1927, Oriental Christ House, Rajkot, Bombay, and Professor Dhirendranath Chowdhuri: *Ram Mohun Roy, the Devotee,* The Modern Review, October 1928.

This year, the centenary of the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj, gave rise in India to the publication of many studies of Ram Mohun Roy.

For the Brahmo Samaj, the church founded by Roy, see Siva Math Sastry: *History of the Brahmo Samaj,* 2 Vols., 1911, Calcutta.

[2] His family came originally from Murshidabad. He was born at Burdwan in Lower Bengal.

The ardour of his combative genius, mettlesome as a young war horse, led him when he was sixteen to enter upon a bitter struggle, destined to last as long as life itself, against idolatry. He published a book in Persian with a preface in Arabic attacking orthodox Hinduism. His outraged father thereupon drove him from home. For four years he travelled in the interior of India and Thibet, studying Buddhism without growing to love it, and risking death from Lamaist fanaticism. At the age of twenty the prodigal son was recalled by his father and returned home. In a vain attempt to attach him to the world he was married, but no cage could contain such a bird.

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[3] On his father's side his family was Viashnavite.

[4] The intuitive power and mystic enlightenment of his nature have been somewhat obscured, especially in the West, by his reputation as a man of vigorous reasoning power and as a social reformer fighting against the mortal and deadly prejudices of his people. But the mystic side of his genius has been brought to the fore again by Dhirendranath Chowdhuri. The freedom of his intellect would not have been so valuable if it had not been based upon devotional elements equally profound and varied. From infancy he appears to have given himself up to certain practices of Yogist meditation, even to Tantric practices, which he later repudiated, concentrating for days on the name or on one attribute of God, repeating the word until the Spirit manifested its presence (the exercise of Purascharana), taking the vows of Brahmachariya (chastity) and silence, practising the mystic exercises of Sufism, more satisfying than the Bhakti of Bengal, which he found too sentimental for his proud taste. But his firm reason and will never resigned their functions. They governed his emotions.

When he was twenty-four he began to learn English, as well as Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He made the acquaintance of Europeans and learnt their laws and their forms of government. As a result he suddenly cast aside his prejudice against the English and made common cause with them. In the higher interests of his people he won their confidence and took them as allies. He had discovered that only by depending on Europe could he hope to struggle for the regeneration of India. Once more he began his violent polemics against barbarous customs such as Sati, the burning of widows.[5] This raised a storm of opposition culminating in his definite expulsion from his family in 1799 at the instance of the Brahmins. A few years later even his mother and his wives, his nearest and dearest, refused to live with him. He spent a dozen hard and courageous years, abandoned by all except one or two Scottish friends. After accepting a post as tax-collector, he gradually rose until he became the ministerial chief of the district.

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[5] It is said that in 1811 he was present at the burning of a young sister-in-law, and that the horror of the sacrifice, heightened by the struggles of the victim, upset him completely, so that he had no peace until he had freed the land from such crimes.

After his father's death he was reconciled to his own people and inherited considerable property. The Emperor of Delhi made him a Rajah, and he had a palace and sumptuous gardens in Calcutta. There he lived in the state of a great lord, giving magnificent receptions in the oriental style with troups of musicians and dancers. His portrait is preserved for us in the Bristol Museum. It reveals a face of great masculine beauty and delicacy with large brown eyes. He is wearing a flat turban like a crown, and a shawl is draped over a robe of Franciscan brown.[6] Although he lived as a Prince of the Arabian Nights, he did not allow it to interfere with his ardent study of the Hindu Scriptures or his campaign for restoring the pure spirit of the Vedas. To this end he translated them into Bengali and English and wrote commentaries upon them. He went even further. Side by side with the Upanishads and the Sutras, he made a close study of the Christian Testaments. It is said that he was the first high caste Hindu to study the teachings of Christ. After the Gospels he published in 1820 a book on the Precepts of Jesus, a Guide to Peace and Happiness. About 1826 for some time he became a member of a Unitarian Society, founded by one of his European friends, the Protestant minister Adam, who secretly flattered himself that he had converted Roy to Christianity, so that he might become its great apostle to the Indians. But Roy was no more to be chained to orthodox Christianity than to orthodox Hinduism, although he believed that he had discovered its real meaning. He remained an independent theist, essentially a rationalist and moralist. He extracted from Christianity its ethical system, but he rejected the Divinity of Christ, just as he rejected the Hindu Incarnations. As a passionate Unitarian he attacked the Trinity no less than polytheism; hence both Brahmins and missionaries were united in enmity against him.

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[6] He had adopted Mohammedan costume. In vain he tried later to impose it at the meetings of the Brahmo Samaj. In dress he possessed an aesthetic taste and hygienic sense of cleanliness and comfort, which belonged rather to Islam than to Hinduism.

But he was not the man to be troubled on that account. As all other churches were closed to him[7] he opened one for himself and for the free believers of the universe. It was preceded by the founding of the Atmiya Sabha (the Society of Friends) in 1815 for the worship of God, the One and Invisible. In 1827 he had published a pamphlet on the Gayatri, supposed to be the most ancient theistic formula of the Hindus. Eventually in 1828 his chief friends, among whom was Tagore, gathered at his house and founded a Unitarian Association, destined subsequently to have a startling career in India, under the name of the Brahmo Samaj,[8] (Adi Brahmo Samaj) the House of God. It was dedicated to the "worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." He was to be worshipped "not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any other particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatever." The church was to be closed to none. Ram Mohun Roy wished that his Brahmo Samaj should be a universal house of prayer, open to all men without distinction of colour, caste, nation or religion. In the deed of gift he laid down that no religion "shall be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to." The cult was to encourage "the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe" and "of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

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[7] With the exception of the excellent Adam's Unitarian Church, which was not in a prosperous condition.

[8] The name of Brahmo Samaj appears erroneously for the first time in the deed of purchase of land whereon the Unitarian temple was built in 1829.

Its first meeting was held on August 25, 1828. Every Saturday from seven to nine recitations of the Vedas, readings from the Upanishads, sermons on Vedic texts, the singing of hymns mostly composed by Roy himself and accompanied musically by a Mohammedan, took place.

Roy then wished to found a universal religion, and his disciples and admirers voluntarily called it "Universalism." But I cannot accept this term in its full and literal meaning; for Roy excluded from it all forms of polytheism from the highest to the lowest. The man who wishes to regard without prejudice religious realities at the present day must take into account that polytheism, from its highest expression in the Three in One of the Christian Trinity to its most debased, holds sway over two-thirds at least of mankind. Roy calls himself correctly a "Hindu Unitarian," and did not hesitate to borrow from the two great unitarian religions, Islam and Christianity.[9] But he defended himself strenuously against the reproach of "eclecticism," and his disciples are agreed on that point. He held that doctrine ought to rest on original synthetic analysis, sounding the depths of religious experience. It is not then to be confounded with the monism of the Vedanta nor with Christian unitarianism. The theism of Roy claims to rest on two poles, the "absolute"

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[9] Ram Mohun Roy's Hindu Unitarianism is nearer to the Bible than the doctrines of his immediate successors at the head of the Brahmo Samaj, especially Devendranath Tagore.

Vedanta and the Encyclopædic thought of the XVIIIth century—in the Formless God and Reason.

It was not easy to define and it was still less easy to realise after he had gone; for it implied a rare harmony of critical intelligence and faith going as far as the enlightenment of a noble mysticism consistently controlled and dominated by reason. Royally constituted physically and morally, he was able to attain the heights of contemplation without losing for an instant the balance of his every day life or interrupting his daily course; he was protected against and disdainfully avoided the emotional excess to which the Bhaktas of Bengal were a prey.[10] It was not until we reach Aurobindo Ghose a century later that we find the same aristocratic freedom of diverse powers linked to the highest type of mind. It was not easily communicable and in fact proved impossible to communicate intact. Noble and pure though the successors of Ram Mohun Roy were, they changed his doctrine out of all recognition. Nevertheless the Constitution of the Bramo Samaj—*the Magna Carta Dei*—which included such part as could be understood and assimilated by his successors, founded a new era in India and Asia and a century has merely proved the grandeur of its conception.

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[10] (Cf. Dhirendranath Chowdhuri: *Ram Mohun Roy, the Devotee, The Modern Review,* October 1928)

. . . "the Raja would be frequently found absorbed (in Brahmasamadhi), all his distractions notwithstanding. . . . For the Raja Samadhi is not an abnormal physiological change of the body that can be effected at will, not unconsciousness generated as in sound sleep, but the highly spiritual culture of perceiving Brahman in *all* and the habit of surrendering the self to the higher self. Atmasakshatkar to him was not to deny the existence of the world . . . but to perceive God in every bit of perception . . . Ram Mohun was pre-eminently a Sadhaka. . . . Though a Vedantist in every pulse of his being, he did not fail to perceive that the Upanishads were not sufficient to satisfy the Bhakti hankerings of the soul, nor was he able to side with the Bhakti cult of Bengal. . . . But he hoped that the needs of Bhakti would be met by the Sufis. . . ."

Roy emphasised its other practical aspect in his vigorous campaigns for social reform,[11] supported by the English administration, more liberal and more intelligent than that of to-day.[12] There was nothing parochial about his patriotism. He cared for nothing but liberty and civil and religious progress. Far from desiring the expulsion of England from India, he wished her to be established there in such a way that her blood, her gold and her thought would intermingle with the Indian, and not as a blood-sucking ghoul leaving her exhausted. He went so far as to wish his people to adopt English as their universal language, to make Indian Western socially and then to achieve independence and enlighten the rest of Asia. His newspapers were impassioned in the cause of liberty on behalf of all the nations of the world—Ireland, Naples crushed under reaction, revolutionary France in the July Days of 1830. But this loyal partisan of co-operation with England could speak frankly to her, and he did not conceal his intention of breaking with her if his great hopes of her as a leader in the advancement of his people were not realised.

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[11] We cannot attempt to give here a full list of his innumerable reforms or attempted reforms. Let it suffice to mention among the chief—Sati (the burning of widows), which he proved to be contrary to the sacred texts and which he persuaded the British Government to forbid in 1829—and his campaign against polygamy—his attempts to secure the remarriage of widows, inter-caste marriage, Indian unity, friendship between Hindus and Musulmans, Hindu education, which he wished to model on the same scientific lines as Europe and for which he wrote in Bengali numerous text books on Geography, Astronomy, Geometry, Grammar, etc., the education of women based on the example of ancient India, liberty of thought and of the Press, legal reforms, political equality etc.

In 1821 he founded a Bengali newspaper, the father of the native Press of India, a Persian paper, another paper called the *Ved Mandir* for the study of Vedic science. Moreover India owes to him her first modern Hindu college and free schools, and ten years after his death the first school for women in Calcutta (1843).

[12] The recent blunders of the Indian Government and the legitimate desire of India to free herself from it, the spirit of brutal and narrow pride of which Lord Curzon as Viceroy was the most striking type, and the spirit of narrow and vainglorious incomprehension reflected in literature in the works of Kipling, ought not to allow the moral debt which India owes to the British administration to be forgotten. Without her aid the social awakening of India during the XIXth century would have been impossible, and the same is true of her unity through the language of her conquerors. Not to mention the admirable work of the Englishmen who rediscovered Sanskrit from William James to William Carey and Wilson, there were the superior merits of the great Governor-Generals of the first days of the conquest—the disinterestedness of Clive, the high intelligence of Warren Hastings, who wrote (who remembers the fact now?) "that the writ-

Towards the end of 1830 the Emperor of Delhi sent him as his ambassador to England; for Roy wished to be present at the debate in the Commons for the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company. He arrived in April, 1831, and was warmly received at Liverpool, at Manchester, at London and at Court. He made many illustrious friends, Bentham among their number, paid a short visit to France, and then died of brain fever at Bristol on September 27, 1833, where he is buried. His epitaph runs:

"A conscientious and steadfast believer in the Unity of Godhead: he consecrated his life with entire devotion

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ings of Indian philosophers would survive when British dominion in India should have long since ceased to exist."

Ram Mohun Roy would never have been able to make headway against the violence of fanatical Brahmins nor to realise certain of his most pressing social reforms without the friendship and support of the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck.

to the worship—or to use the language of Europe, its meaning being the same, 'of Human Unity.' "

This man of gigantic personality, whose name to our shame is not inscribed in the Pantheon of Europe as well as of Asia, sank his ploughshare in the soil of India and sixty years of labour left her transformed. A great writer of Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and English, the father of modern Bengali prose, the author of celebrated hymns, poems, sermons, philosophic treatises and political controversial writings of all kinds, he sowed his thoughts and his passion broadcast. And out of the earth of Bengal has come forth the harvest—a harvest and works and men.

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The poet's grandfather, Dvarakanath Tagore, a friend of Ram Mohun Roy, was the chief supporter of the Brahmo Samaj after the latter's death;[13] Rabindranath's father, Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Roy's second successor after the interregnum of Ramchandra Vidyabagish, was the man who really organised the Brahmo Samaj. This noble figure, aureoled in history with the name of Saint (Maharshi) bestowed upon him by his people merits some attempt at a short description.[14]

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[13] Dvarakanath, like Roy, died during a journey to England in 1846. This double death in the West is a sign of the current carrying towards Europe the first pilots of the Brahmo Samaj.

[14] Devendranath left an autobiography in Bengali (translated into English by Satyendranath Tagore and Indiri Devi, 1909, Calcutta), which gives the story of the long pilgrimage of his inner life from the depths of illusion and superstition to the Spirit of the Living God, and is in reality the religious Journal of his soul.

(Cf. an excellent little article by M. Dugard in *Feuilles de l'Inde,* 1st volume, 1928, C. A. Hőgman, editor, Boulogne- sur-Seine.)

He had the physical and spiritual beauty, the high intellect, the moral purity, the aristocratic perfection, which he had bequeathed to his children; moreover, he possessed the same deep and warm poetic sensibility.

Born at Calcutta, the eldest son of a rich family, brought up in orthodox traditions, his adolescence was exposed to the seductions of the world and the snares of pleasure, from which he was rescued by a visitation of death to his home. But he was to pass through a long moral crisis before he reached the threshold of religious space. It is characteristic that his decisive advances were always the result of poetic emotions roused by some accidental happening: the wind that carried to him the name of Hari (Vishnu), chanted to a dying man on a night of full moon on the banks of the Ganges; or the words of a boatman during a storm—"Be not afraid! Forward!"—or again the wind that blew a torn page of Sanskrit to his feet, whereon were written words from the Upanishads, which seemed to him the voice of God—"Leave all and follow Him! Enjoy his inexpressible riches. . . ."

In 1839 with his brothers and sisters and several friends he founded a Society for the propagation of the truths in which they believed. Three years later he joined the Brahmo Samaj and became its leading spirit. It was he who built up its faith and ritual. He organised its regular worship, founded a school of theology for the training of ministers, preached himself and in 1848 wrote in Sanskrit the *Brahmo Dharma,* "a theistic manual of religion and ethics for the edification of the faithful."[15] He himself considered that it was inspired.[16] The source of his inspiration, of quite a different order from that of Ram Mohun Roy, was almost entirely the Upanishads but subjected to a free interpretation.[17] Deverdranath afterwards laid down the four articles of faith of the Brahmo Samaj:

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[15] An English translation has just been published by H. Chundra Sarkar. The *Brahmo Dharma* has had a large circulation in India, where it has been translated into different dialects.

1. In the beginning was nothing. The One Supreme Being alone existed. He created the universe.
2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, Eternal and Omnipresent, the One without second.
3. Our salvation depends on belief in Him and in His worship in this world and the next.
4. Belief consists in loving Him and doing His will.

The faith of the Brahmo Samaj then is a faith in a *One God, who created the universe out of nothing,* and who is characterised essentially by the Spirit of Kindness, and whose absolute adoration is necessary for the salvation of *man in the next world.*

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[16] "It was the Truth of God that penetrated my heart. These living truths came down into my heart from Him who is the Life and the Light and the Truth." (Devendranath). He dictated the first part in three hours, and the whole of the treatise was produced "in the language of the Upanishads like a river; spiritual truths flowed through my mind by His grace." The danger with this process of inspired legislation, the natural expression of a man of Davendranath's temperament, is that, on the one hand, his Brahmo Samaj maintained that "Truth is the only eternal and imperishable scripture" and did not recognise any other holy book as scripture, and, on the other, that Truth rested on the authority of this inner outpouring which had issued in the last resort from several of the Hindu Scriptures, chosen and commented upon in a preconceived sense.

[17] Devendranath's attitude to the Holy Books was not always consistent. Between 1844 and 1846 at Benares he seems to have considered that the Vedas were infallible, but later after 1847 he abandoned this idea and individual inspiration gained the upper hand.

I have no means of judging whether this is as purely Hindu a conception as Devendranath thought it was. But it is interesting to note that the Tagore family belong to a community of Brahmins called Pirilis, or chief Ministers, as post occupied by its members under the Musulman regime. In a sense they were put outside caste by their relations with Mohammedans;[18] it is, however, perhaps not too much to say that the persistent rigour of their theism has been due to this influence. From Dvarakanath to Rabindranath they have been the implacable enemies of all forms of idolatry.[19]

According to K. T. Paul, Devendranath had to wage a prolonged struggle, on the one hand against the practises of orthodox Hinduism, and, on the other, against Christian propaganda which sought to gain a footing in the Brahmo Samaj. The need for defence led him to surround the citadel with a fortification of firm and right principles as picket posts. The bridge was raised between it and the two extremes of Indian religion—polytheism, which Devendranath strictly prohibited[20] and the absolute monism of Sankara; for the Brahmo *Burg* was the stronghold of the great Dualism of the One and personal God and Human Reason, to whom God has granted the power and the right to interpret the Scriptures. I have already pointed out that in Devendranath's case and still more that of his successors, Reason had a tendency to be confused with religious inspiration. About 1860 from the depths of an eighteen month's retreat in the Himalayas near the Simla Hills he produced a garland of solitary meditation.[21] These thoughts were later expanded into improvised sermons deeply moving to his Calcutta public. Further he bestowed upon the Brahmo Samaj a new liturgy inspired by the Upanishads and impregnated with an ardent and pure spirituality.

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[18] (Cf. Manjulal Dave: *The Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore,* 1927.)

[19] Over the door of Shantiniketan, the home of the Tagores, an inscription runs: "In this place no image is to be adored." But it goes on to add, "And no man's faith is to be despised."

Islamic influences in the infancy of Ram Mohun Roy as well must always be borne in mind in considering the penetration of the Indian spirit with the current of monotheism.

[20] To such a degree that at his father's death in 1846 the eldest son, whose business it was to arrange the funeral ceremonies, refused to bow to family tradition because it included idolatrous rites. The scandal was so great that his family and friends broke with him. I must not linger over the years of noble trial which followed. Devendranath devoted himself to the crushing task of paying back his father's creditors in full and of meeting all the engagements made by his prodigality; for he died heavily in debt.

A short time after his return from the Himalayas in 1862 he adopted as his coadjutor Keshab Chunder

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[21] His young son, Rabindranath, accompanied him.

I love to associate with the magnificent memories of this impassioned retreat in the Himalayas, the wonderful appeal later addressed by Rabindranath to the "Shepherd of the peoples."

"Ruler of peoples' minds and builder of India's destiny. Thy name rises in the sky from summits of the Himalayas and Vindhyas, flows in the stream of the Ganges and is sung by the surging sea.

"In Thy name wake Punjab and Sind, Maratha and Gujrat, Dravid, Utval and Vanga. They gather at Thy feet asking for Thy blessing and singing Thy victory.

"Victory to Thee, Giver of good to all people, Victory to Thee, Builder of India's destiny.

"There sounds Thy call and they come before Thy throne the Hindus and Buddhists, the Jains and Sikhs, the Parsees, Musulmans and Christians. The East and the West meet to unite their love at Thy shrine.

"Victory to Thee who makest one the minds of all people.

"Victory to Thee, Builder of India's destiny." The Fugitive Call to the Fatherland.)

In point of fact Rabindranath profited by the wider thought given to the primitive Brahmo Samaj by Keshab Chunder Sen.

Sen, a young man of twenty-three, who was destined to surpass him and to provoke a schism, or rather a series of schisms in the Brahmo Samaj.

This man,[22] who only lived from 1838 to 1884, irresolute, restless but at the same time inspired was the chief personality to influence the Brahmo Samaj during the second half of the XIXth century. He enriched and renewed it to such an extent that he endangered its very existence.

He was the representative of a different class and generation much more deeply impregnated with Western influences. Instead of being a great aristocrat like Roy and Devendranath, he belonged to the liberal and distinguished middle class of Bengal, who were in constant intellectual touch with Europe. He belonged to the sub-caste of physicians. His grandfather, a remarkable man, the native secretary of the Asiatic Society, had control over the publication of all the editions of books published in Hindustani. He was left an orphan at an early age, and was brought up in an English School. It was this that made him so different from his two predecessors; for he never knew Sanskrit and very soon broke away from the popular forms of the Hindu religion.[23] Christ had touched him, and it was to be his mission in life to introduce him into the Brahmo Samaj, and into the heart of a group of the best minds in India. When he died *The India Christian Herald* said of him, "The Christian Church mourns the death of its greatest ally. Christians looked upon him as God's messenger, sent to awake India to the spirit of Christ. Thanks to him hatred of Christ died out."

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[22] For Keshab Chunder Sen, see

1. Pandit Gour Govindo Roy: Nine volumes have appeared of a biography in Bengali.

2. Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar (his chief disciple and successor): *The Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj,* 1882, Calcutta. *Aims and Principles of Keshab Ch.* Sen. 1889, Calcutta.

3. Promotho Loll Sen: *Keshab Chunder Sen, a Study,* 1902, new edition, 1915, Calcutta.

4. T. L. Vaswami: *Sri Keshab Ch. Sen, a Social Mystic,* 1916, Calcutta.

5. B. Mozoomdar, (President of the Keshab Mission Society): *Professor Max Müller on Ramakrishna; the world on Keshab Ch. Sen,* 1900, Calcutta.

6. Manilal C. Parekh: *Brahmarshi Keshab Ch. Sen,* 1926, Rajkot, Oriental Christ House.

(This work by an Indian Christian disciple is the only one to show clearly Keshab's Christianity. It was at first tentative, but gradually took possession of him more and more definitely and completely).

7. Keshab Chunder Sen: *A Voice from the Himalayas,* a collection of the lectures delivered by Keshab at Simla in 1868, preceded by an introduction, 1927, Simla.

This last statement is not quite correct; for we shall see to what point Keshab himself had to suffer as the champion of Christ. The real significance of his life has been obscured by most of the men who have spoken of him even within the Brahmo Samaj; for they were offended by the heresy of their chief and tried to hide it. He himself only revealed it by degrees, so that it is through documents written as long as twenty years before his death that we learn from his own lips that his life had been influenced from his youth up by three great Christian visitants, John the Baptist, Christ and St. Paul.[24] Moreover in a serious confidential letter to his intimate disciple, Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar,[25] a letter of primary importance passed over in silence by non-Christian Brahmos, he shows us how he was waiting until the time was ripe to make public avowal of his faith in Christ. The double life Keshab led for so long, was partly caused by the duality of his own character, compounded as it was of the diverse and incompatible elements of the East and the West, which were in constant conflict with each other. Hence it is very difficult for the historian to make an impartial study; Hindu biographers, in nearly every case hotly partizans, have done nothing to lighten his task.[26] He was introduced to the Brahmo Samaj by Devendranath Tagore's son, a student of the same college, and during the early days of his admission, young Keshab was surrounded with love. He became the darling of Devendranath and of the young members of the Brahmo Samaj, who felt themselves drawn into closer contact with him than with the noble Devendranath, dwelling in spite of himself in Olympian isolation as the result of his breeding and idealism.[27] Keshab had a social sense and wished to rouse the same feeling throughout India. A hyper-individualist by nature and doubtless just because this was the case,[28] he early in life recognised that part of the evils of his country arose out of this same hyper-individualism, and that India needed to acquire a new moral conscience. "Let all souls be socialised and realise their unity with the people, the visible community." This conception, uniting[29] the aristocratic unitarianism of Roy to the Indian masses, put young Keshab into communion with the most ardent aspirations of the rising generation. Just as Vivekananda in after days (Vivekananda incidentally owed him a great deal without perhaps realising it; for ideas are the natural outcome of the age and are born at the same time in different minds) Keshab believed religion to be necessary for the regeneration of the race. In an address at Bombay in 1868 he maintained that he wished to make it "the basis of social reforms." Hence religious reform within the Brahmo Samaj was to bear fruit in action. Keshab's active,

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[23] It is only natural that in spite of this fact he never lost the religious temperament peculiar to his race. Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar in the course of a conversation in 1884 with Ramakrishna related the mystic childhood of Keshab. *(The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.)* He was early "marked by non-attachment to the things of this world" and absorbed in inward concentration and contemplation. "He was even subject to fits of loss of consciousness due to excess of devotion." He later applied the forms of Hindu religious "devotion" to non-Hindu religious objects. And the "Vaishnavited' form of Christianity he adopted was accompanied by a constant study of Yoga.

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[24] Easter, 1879; Lecture: India Asks, Who is Christ? ". . . My Christ, my sweet Christ, the brightest jewel of my heart, the necklace of my soul—for twenty years have I cherished Him in this my miserable heart."

January, 1879, Lecture: Am I an Inspired Prophet?

"What was it that made me so singular in the earlier years of my life? Providence brought me into the presence of three very singular persons in those days. They were among my soul's earliest acquaintances. I met three stately figures, heavenly, majestic, and full of divine radiance. . . . (The first) John the Baptist was seen going about in the wilderness of India, saying, 'Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' . . . I fell down at the feet of John the Baptist. . . . He passed away, and then came another prophet far greater than he, the prophet of Nazareth. . . . 'Take no thought for the morrow.' These words of Jesus found a lasting lodgment in my heart. Hardly had Jesus finished his words, when came another prophet, and that was the travelled ambassador of Christ, the strong, heroic and valiant Apostle Paul. . . . And his words (relating to chastity) came upon me like a burning fire at a most critical period of my life."

It should be added that he had gained a knowledge of the New Testament at the English College, for a chaplain used to read it to the young people, translating it from the Greek.

[25] In this letter, wheron the exact date does not appear, but which it is safe to assume was written to Mozoomdar directly after his famous lecture in 1866 on "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia." Keshab explained himself thus:

". . . I have my own ideas about Christ, but I am not bound to give them out in due form, until the altered circumstances of the country gradually develop them out of my mind. Jesus is identical with self-sacrifice, and as He lived and preached in the fulness of time, so must He be in turn preached in the fulness of time . . . I am, therefore, patiently waiting that I may grow with the age and the nation and that the spirit of Christ's sacrifice may grow therewith." (Cf. Manilal C. Parekh: *op. cit.* pp. 29-31.)

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[26] The author does not attempt to hide his grudge against these historians; for nearly all of them seem to consider history as a mass of material wherein one is at liberty to choose only those facts which serve to plead a personal cause, and systematically to ignore the rest. (This is apart from the superb indifference to scientific exactitude, which characterises all Hindu historians: it is a miracle if a few dates can be gleaned here and there: even when they do appear they have been scattered with such careless hand that it is impossible to rely upon them.) This short dissertation on Keshab's personality and its development has had to be rewritten three times, after the discovery of essential points, either omitted or twisted out of all recognition by his accredited Indian biographers.

[27] "Devendranath was too preoccupied by his personal relationship to God to feel more than moderately the call of social responsibilities." From a letter of a friend of the Tagores.

[28] His chief disciple, Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar, said that he constantly struggled against the flights of his mystic nature, and

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that "he always succeeded in containing them" (a fact which is not altogether true); for the great object of his life was to bring religion within the reach of heads of families, in other words to re-establish it in ordinary every day life. This was one of the sources of those contradictions in his character, which compromised his work. He attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable —the mystic upspringing natural to him, and the canalisation of the divine stream for the moral and social service of the community—Theocentrism and anthropocentrism, to use the language of Western mysticism as analysed by the able Henri Brémond. Both of them, moreover, in the case of Keshab existed in the highest degree. But his rich nature, too plastic, too perpetually receptive to all spiritual foods offered for the satisfaction of his appetite, which was greater than his faculty for absorption, made him a living contradiction. It is said that while at College he played the part of Hamlet in a performance of Shakespeare's play. In point of fact he remained the young prince of Denmark to the end of his life.

[29] In theory at least. In practice Keshab never succeeded in touching the masses. His thought was too impregnated with elements alien to the thought of India.

but somewhat restless hand was therefore to be seen casting into the soil of India, a handful of fruitful seeds, which in his turn Vivekananda [30] sowed broadcast with mighty arm upon the mother country already awakened by the thunder of his words.

But Keshab came before his time. Some of his reforms even came up against the traditional spirit of the Brahmo Samaj. It has been generally considered that the stumbling block between him and Devendranath was the question of inter-caste marriages, but I am certain that there were others far more important. Their mutual affection has drawn a veil over the causes of their separation, but from what happened immediately afterwards, they can be surmised. However open Devendranath's mind might be to the great ideal of constructing the harmony of humanity through the Brahmo Samaj, he remained deeply attached to Indian tradition and her sacred Writings.[31] He could not be blind to the Christianity working in the mind of his favourite disciple, and at whatever personal cost, he could no longer remain in association with a coadjutor who based his teachings on the New Testament.

In 1868 the fatal rupture took place, and there was a schism in the Brahmo Samaj. Devendranath kept the direction of the Adi Brahmo Samaj (the first Brahmo Samaj)[32] and Keshab departed to found the Brahmo Samaj of India. For both men this was a severe trial, but especially for Keshab, whose heresy made him hated. At first he did not forsee this contingency. Strong in his popularity and the ardent support of his faithful friends, three months after the break he made a public declaration in his famous lecture on "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia." [33] There he professed Christ, but an Asiatic Christ little understood by Europe clothed in—"all the grandeur of which the Asiatic nature is susceptible." His Christianity was still in the main a question of ethics. Keshab was attracted by the mortality of Christ and his two principles of pardon and self-sacrifice. Through these principles and through Him he maintained that "Europe and Asia may learn to find harmony and unity."

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[30] A great many social institutions were eventually founded by Keshab for the service of the people:—Night Schools, Industrial Schools, the Calcutta College, the Normal School for Indian Women, a society for the help of women, the Indian Association of Reform, the Fraternity of Goodwill, numerous Samajas, etc.

[31] B. Mozoomdar said, "The Brahmo Samaj of Devendranath was in theory eclectic, but in fact purely Hindu in character," My friend, Prof. Kalidas Nag, who is connected with the Tagores by ties of affection, wrote to me, "Devendranath could not bear radical changes. He rendered full justice to the West, and highly appreciated the Fénélon, Fichte and Victor Cousin. But he could not tolerate aggressive demonstrations of fanatical zeal. Keshab was a zealot, who wished to lead his disciples in a veritable crusade against India's social evils."

His ardour as a neophyte was such that he made his friends call him Jesudas, or the servant of Jesus, and he celebrated Christmas by a fast within a small circle of intimate friends.

But the lecture had created a scandal, and Keshab did not improve matters by a second speech upon Great

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[32] It was not long before Devendranath retired from active life. He went to live in a self-chosen retreat at Bolpur, near Calcutta, to which he gave the name of Shantiniketan, the Abode of Peace. There he spent the rest of his life in an atmosphere of aristocratic sanctity and died in 1905, a patriarch in the midst of his royal posterity.

[33] It is obvious that Devendranath knew of this imminent confession of faith when he separated from Keshab. At that time Keshab was deep in the study of Christianity and in particular occupied in reading a book which had a great vogue at that time —Seeley's *Ecce Homo*.

Men (1866).[34] Therein, if I may use such an expression, he made Jesus come into line among the messengers of God, each one of whom was charged with his own special message, and was to be accepted without special attachment to any single one. He threw open his Church to men of all countries and all ages, and introduced for the first time extracts from the Bible, the Koran, the Zend Avesta[35] into the manual of devotional lessons for the use of the Brahmo Samaj. But far from dying down, feeling ran higher.

Keshab was not the man to be unmoved by it. His sensitive and defenceless heart suffered more than most from disaffection. Public misunderstanding, the desertion of his companions, heavy material difficulties, and over and above all the torments of his own conscience, perhaps even doubts as to his mission added to "a very lively sense of weakness, of sin and or repentance" peculiarly his own as distinct from most of the other religious spirits of Hinduism,[36] resulted in a devastating crisis of soul, which lasted throughout 1867. He was alone with his grief, without any outside help, alone with God. But God spoke to him, so that the religious experience of that year when he was racked by conflicting emotions, as he daily officiated as divine priest by himself in his house, led to a complete transformation not only in his ideas but in their expression. Up till then he had been the chief among religious intellectuals, a moralist, a stranger to sentimental effusions, which had been repellent to him; but now he was flooded by a torrent of emotion—love and tears—and gave himself up to it in rapture.

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[34] It is perhaps worthy of notice that among the youthful readings of Keshab none impressed him more than the works of Carlyle and Emerson.

[35] This manual, called the *Slokasangraha,* (1866) though a great deal larger than Devendranath's, never had such a wide circulation in India as the Brahmo Dharma. Nevertheless Keshab followed the true tradition of Roy when he said that "the harmony of religions was the real mission of the Brahmo Samaj."

[36] It was P. C. Mozoomdar who noted in him this "sense of sin" so curiously at variance with the spirit of Devendranath as well as Ramakrishna and above all of Vivekananda. We shall see later that Vivekananda denounced it as evidence of a weak disposition, a real mental malady, for which he threw the blame on Christianity. The state of mind that Keshab systematically cultivated culminated in a sermon delivered in 1881: We Apostles of the New Dispensation, where he likened himself to Judas much to the scandal of his hearers.

This was the dawn of a new era for the Brahmo Samaj. The mysticism of the great Bhakta, Chiatanya, and the Sankirtans were introduced within its walls. From morning till night there were prayers and hymns accompanied by Vaishnavite musical instruments, and feasts of God;[37] and Keshab officiated at them all, his face bathed in tears—he, who, it was said, had never wept. The wave of emotion spread. Keshab's sincerity, his spirit of universal comprehension and his care for the public weal brought him the sympathy alike of the best minds of India and England, including the Viceroy. His journey to England in 1870 was a triumphal progress. The enthusiasm he roused was equal to that inspired by Kossuth. During his six months' stay[38] he addressed seventy meetings of 40,000 persons and fascinated his audiences by the

[37] It is noticeable that on this occasion there was no question of Christ. The Bhakti of Chaitanya is another aspect of Keshab's religion. "Thus," wrote P. C. Mozoomdar, "Keshab stood at the threshold of his independent career with the shadow of Jesus on the one hand, and the shadow of Chaitanya on the other." His enemies took account of it in 1884 when some of them reported maliciously to Ramakrishna that Keshab had claimed to be "a partial incarnation of Christ and Chaitanya."

[38] He came to know Gladstone, Stuart Mill, Max Müller, Francis Newman, Dean Stanley, etc. personally.

simplicity of his English and by his musical voice. He was compared to Gladstone. He was greeted as the spiritual ally of the West, the Evangelist of Christ in the East. In all good faith both sides were labouring under delusions, destined to be dissipated during the following years, not without a naive deception of the English. For Keshab remained deeply Indian at heart and was not to be enrolled in the ranks of European Christianity. On the other hand, he thought he could enroll it. India and the Brahmo Samaj profited from the good disposition of the government.[39] In its reconstituted form, it spread in all directions, to Simla, Bombay, Lahore, Lucknow, Monghyr, etc. A mission tour undertaken by Keshab across India in 1873 with the object of bringing about unity among the brothers and sisters of the new faith, a tour which was the forerunner of the great voyage of exploration undertaken twenty years later by Vivekananda in the guise of a wandering Sannyasin. The tour opened up new horizons and he believed that he had found the key to popular polytheism, so repugnant to the Brahmo Samaj, and that he could make an alliance between it and pure theism. But to this union, realised spontaneously by Ramakrishna at the same time, Keshab brought a spirit of intellectual compromise. He was obliged to convince himself (he failed to convince the polytheists) that their gods were at bottom nothing but the names of different attributes of the one God.

"Their (Hindu) idolatry," he wrote in *The Sunday Mirror,*[40] "is nothing but the worship of divine attributes materialised. If the material shape is given up, what remains is a beautiful allegory. . . . We have found out that every idol worshipped by the Hindu represents an attribute of God, and that each attribute is called by a peculiar name. The believer in the New Dispensation is required to worship God as the possessor of all those attributes, represented by the Hindu as innumerable, or three hundred and thirty millions. To believe in an undivided Deity, without reference to the aspects of his nature is to believe in an abstract God, and it would lead us to practical rationalism and infidelity. If we are to worship Him in all His manifestations, we shall name one attribute Lakshmi, another Saraswati, another Mahadeva, etc., etc. . . ."

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[39] Especially in the case of several reforms, among them a legislative one directly concerning the Brahmo Samaj—the legal recognition of Brahmo marriages.

[40] August 1, 1880: The Philosophy of Idol worship.

This meant a great step forward in religious comprehension,[40] embracing as it did the greater part of mankind. But it never came to anything because Keshab intended that his Theism should have all the real power and polytheism was to receive nothing but outward honour. On the other hand, he avoided Advaitism, absolute Monism, which has always been forbidden to the Brahmo. The result was that religious reason sat on the fence separating the two camps of the two extreme faiths. The prevailing situation was not an exact equilibrium of rest and the position in which Keshab insisted on placing himself could not be a permanent one. For he believed that he was called by God to dictate His new revealed law, the New Dispensation, from thence. He began to proclaim it in 1875,[41] the year when his relations with Ramakrishna began.

Like so many self-appointed legislators, he found it difficult to establish law and order in his own mind, especially as he wished his legislation to be all embracing and to include Christ and Brahman, the Gospels and Yoga, religion and reason. Ramakrishna reached the same point in all simplicity through his heart, and made no attempt to fence his discovery within a body of doctrine and precept; he was content to show the way, to set the example, to give the impetus. Keshab adopted at the same time the methods of an intellectual European at the head of a school of comparative religion and the methods of inspired persons of India and America—Bhakti in tears, Revivals and public confessions.

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[41] In the Lecture: Behold the Light of Heaven in India.

He gave to each of his favourite disciples a different form of religion to study[42] and Yoga to practise,[43] His skill as a teacher was shown in choosing for each disciple the one best adapted to his individual character.

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[42] Each of his four chosen disciples dedicated himself to a life-long study of one of the four great religions, and in some cases was absorbed into the subject of his study: Upadhyaya Gour Govindo Roy was given Hinduism and produced a monumental work, a Sanskrit commentary on the Gita and a life of Sri Krishna: Sadhu Aghore Nath studied Buddhism, and wrote a life of Buddha in Bengali, following in his footsteps until he was cut off in the prime of a saintly life: Bhai Girish Chunder Sen devoted himself to Islam, translated the Koran and wrote a life of Mahomet and several other works in Arabic and Persian. Finally Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar studied Christianity and published a book called *The Oriental Christ.* He was so impregnated with its spiritual atmosphere that real Indian Christians such as Manilal C. Parekh, sprang from the school of thought he founded.

[43] After January 1, 1875, when he inaugurated the new method of spiritual development usually called the Dispensation, he varied the paths of the soul (Yogas) according to the character of his disciples, recommending Bhakti to some, Jnana to others, Raja to others. The different forms of devotion were linked together by the different names or attributes of God. (Cf. P. C. Mozoomdar). I shall return to this point in my second volume when I study Hindu mysticism and the different kinds of Yoga.

He himself oscillated between two advisors, both equally dear to him—the living example of Ramakrishna to whom he went for guidance in ecstasy, and the precepts of the Christian faith as practised by an Anglican monk, who later became a Roman Catholic, Luke Rivington. Moreover he could never choose between the life of God and the life of the world, and with disarming sincerity he maintained that the one was not necessarily harmful to the other.[44]

But the confusion of his mind wronged him and reacted on the Brahmo Samaj, all the more because he was a man "of the most transparent sincerity," [45] who neglected the most elementary precautions to conceal the changeableness and heterogeneity of his nature. The result was a new schism in the Brahmo Samaj in 1878, and Keshab found himself the butt of violent attacks from his own people, who accused him of having betrayed his principles.[46] The majority of his friends deserted him and so he fell fatally into the hands of the few faithful ones that remained—Ramakrishna and Father Luke Rivington. Moreover this new trial reopened the door to a whole flood of professions of the Christian faith, which became more and more explicit and in accordance with the deepest metaphysics of Christianity. Thus in the lecture: *Am I an Inspired Prophet?* (January 1879) he described his childish visions of John the Baptist, Christ and St. Paul; in: *India asks, Who is Christ?* (Easter 1879) he announced to India the coming of "the Bridegroom . . . my Christ, my sweet Christ, born of God and man;"[47] and in: *Does God Manifest Himself Alone?* he showed the Son sitting on the right hand of the Father.[48]

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[44] His well-wishers such as Ramakrishna, did not fail to remark with a touch of malice that this saintly man left his affairs in good order and a rich house, etc., when he died. Keshab did not renounce the pleasures of society, he took an active part in amusements and played in the dramas acted in his house. (Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* April, 1884.) But Ramakrishna never doubted his sincerity. It was unimpeachable. He only regretted that such a religious and gifted man should remain half way to God instead of giving himself entirely to Him.

[45] Promotho Loll Sen: *op. cit.*

[46] The occasion was a domestic one, the marriage of his daughter before the age established by the law of the Brahmo Samaj to a Maharaja. But here again, as in the schism with Devendranath, the real cause was hidden. A third Brahmo Samaj was founded, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, more narrow and definitely anti-Christian.

All these pronouncements, however, did not hinder him from dictating at the same time from the heights of the Himalayas his famous Epistle to Indian Brethren (1880) for the jubilee of the Brahmo Samaj, announcing in a pontificial tone "Urbi et Orbi,"[49] the Message entrusted to him by God, the New Dispensation. One might believe that the words came out of the Bible:

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[47] "My Master Jesus . . . Young men of India . . . Believe and remember . . . He will come to you as self-surrender, as ascetism, as Yoga . . . The Bridegroom cometh . . . Let India, beloved India, be dressed in all her jewellery."

Again Keshab declared in his articles in *The Indian Mirror,* "What the Brahmo Samaj did to clear the moral character of Christ more than twelve years ago, it does with respect to His divinity at the present day." (April 20, 1879). There were no half measures about this. Christ was God.

And again, "The Mosaic dispensation only? Perhaps the Hindu dispensation also. In India He will fulfil the Hindu dispensation."

[48] This lecture followed and completed another: God-Vision in the XIXth century, wherein Keshab in his homage to science, is a fore-runner of Vivekananda, who has joined heaven and earth."

[49] *Urbi et Orbi:*—that is to say, the City (Rome) and the world (like the Roman Pope.)

"Hearken, Oh Hindustan, the Lord your God is one."

So begins the Epistle to the Indian Brethren.

"Jehovah the great spirit, whose clouds thunder 'I am,' whom the heavens and the earth declare." (*ibid.*)

"I write this epistle to you, dear and beloved friends, in the spirit and after the manner of St. Paul, however unworthy I am of his honoured Master. . . ." (*ibid.*)

But he adds,

"Paul wrote full of faith in Christ. As a theist I write to you this, my humble epistle, at the feet, not of one prophet only, but of all the prophets in heaven and earth, living or dead. . . ."

For he claimed to be the fulfilment of Christ the forerunner.

"The New Dispensation is the prophecy of Christ fulfilled. . . . The Omnipotent speaks to-day to our country as formerly he did to other nations. . . ." [50]

At this moment he even believed that he was formed of the same stuff as the Spirit of God.

"The Spirit of God and my inner self are knit together. If you have seen me, you have seen Him. . . ."

What then does the Omnipotent, whose voice he is, have to declare? What "new Love, new Hope, new Joy does He bring?" ("How sweet is this new Evangel.")

This is what Jehovah as God of India dictates to the new Moses;

"The Infinite Spirit, whom no eye hath seen, and no ear hath heard, is your God, and you should have none other God. There are two false gods, raised by men of India in opposition to the All Highest—the Divinity which ignorant hands have fashioned, and the divinity which the vain dreams of intellectuals have imagined are alike the enemy of our Lord.[51] You must abjure them both. . . . Do not adore either dead matter, or dead men, or dead abstractions. . . . Adore the living Spirit, who sees without eyes. . . . The communion of the soul with God and with the departed saints shall be your true heaven, and you must have none other. . . . In the spiritual exaltation of the soul find the joy and the holiness of heaven. . . . Your heaven is not far away; it is within you. You must honour and love all the ancients of the human family—prophets, saints, martyrs, sages, apostles, missionaries, philanthropists of all ages and all countries without caste prejudice. Let not the holy men of India monopolise your affection and your homage: Render to all prophets the devotion and universal affection that is their due. . . . Every good and great man is the personification of some special element of Truth and Divine Goodness. Sit humbly at the feet of all heavenly messengers. . . . Let their blood be your blood, their flesh your flesh: . . . Live in them and they will live in you for ever."

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[50] Cf. sermon: Behold the Light of Heaven in India (1875).

Nothing more noble can be imagined. This is the very highest expression of universal theism; and it comes very close to the free theism of Europe without any forced act of allegiance to revealed religion. It opens its arms to all the purified spirits of the whole earth, past, present and future; for the Gospel of

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[51] The first divinity condemned is easy to define, the idols of wood, metal and stone. The second is further defined by "the unseen idols of modern scepticism, abstractions, unconscious evolution, blind protoplasm, etc." This then is scientific or rational or Advaitist intellectualism. But Keshab was far from condemning real science as is shown by his lecture on The Vision of God in the XIXth Century. (1879).

Keshab does not claim to be the final word of the revelation. "The Indian Scriptures are not closed.[52] New chapters are added every year. . . . Go ever further in the love and the knowledge of God: . . . What the Lord will reveal to us in ten years' time who can say, except Himself?"

But how is this free and broad theism with its serene and assured tone to be reconciled to his abasement at the feet of Christ in the previous year? [53]

"I must tell you . . . that I am connected with Jesus' Gospel, and occupy a prominent place in it. I am the prodigal son of whom Christ spoke and I am trying to return to my Father in a penitent spirit. Nay, I will say more for the satisfaction and edification of my opponents. . . . I am Judas, that vile man who betrayed Jesus . . . the veritable Judas who sinned against the truth. And Jesus lodges in my heart: . . ."

The overwhelming effect of such a public confession on those members of the Brahmo Samaj, who had followed their chief up to that point,[54] may be imagined.

But Keshab was still debating with himself. He professed Christ but he denied that he was a "Christian.[55] He tried to unite Christ to Socrates and to

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[52] A favourite idea of Vivekananda may be recognised therein.

[53] In the sermon: We, the Apostles of the New Dispensation. (1881).

[54] That is why their writings about Keshab are very careful (as far as I know) to make no mention of such an avowal.

[55] "Honour Christ but never be 'Christian' in the popular acceptation of the term. . . . Christ is not Christianity . . . Let it be your ambition to outgrow the popular types of narrow Christian faith and merge in the vastness of Christ":

In an article of the same period called "Other Sheep have I."

"We belong to no Christian sect. We disclaim the Christian name. Did the immediate disciples of Christ call themselves Christian? . . . Whoso believes in God and accepts Christ as the Son of God has fellowship with Christ in the Lord. . . . Here his

Chiatanya in a strange way by thinking of each of them as a part of his body or of his mind.[56] Nevertheless he instituted the sacramental ceremonies of Christianity in his Samaj, adapting them to Indian usage. On March 6, 1881 he celebrated the Blessed Sacrament with rice and water instead of bread and wine,[57] and three months later the sacrament of baptism, wherein Keshab himself set the example, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Finally in 1882 he took the decisive step. The Christian Trinity of all Christian mysteries has always been the greatest stumbling block for Asia, and an object of repulsion or derision.[58] Keshab not only accepted and adopted it, but extolled it with gladness [59] and was enlightened by it. This mystery seemed to him, and certainly not without reason, to be the keystone of the arch of Christian metaphysics, the supreme conception of the universe . . . "the treasury in which lies the accumulated wealth of the world's sacred literature—all that is precious in philosophy, theology,

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words—'And other sheep I have' We, the Gentiles of the New Dispensation are the other sheep. The shepherd knows us . . . Christ has found us and accepted us. . . . That is enough. Is any Christian greater than Christ?"

[56] "The Lord Jesus is my will, Socrates my head, Chaitanya my heart, the Hindu Rishi my soul and the philanthropic Howard my right hand."

[57] Keshab read a verse from St. Luke, and he prayed "that the Holy Spirit might turn their grossly material substance into sanctifying spiritual forces so that upon entering our system they might be assimilated to it as the flesh and blood of all the saints in Christ Jesus."

[58] The reason for this is obscure as regards Vedantic India; for she also has her Trinity, and Keshab rightly made it approach the Christian Trinity:—"Sat, Chit, Ananda" (Being, Knowledge, Happiness, which Keshab translated by Truth, Wisdom and Joy) the three in one: Satchidananda.

[59] In a lecture of 1882: That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity.

and poetry (of all humanity) . . . the loftiest expression of the world's religious consciousness. . . ." He defines the three Persons very exactly, I believe, from an orthodox point of view.[60] Did anything still separate him from Christianity?

Only one thing but it was world in itself—his own message, the Indian Dispensation. He could never bring himself to renounce it. He indeed adopted Christ, but Christ in His turn had to adopt India and the Theism of Keshab. "Begone, idolatry: Preachers of idol-worship, adieu:" (This apostrophe was addressed to the West). Christ is the eternal word. "As sleeping Logos Christ lived potentially in the Father's bosom, long, long before he came into this world of ours." He appeared before his physical life in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and in India, in the poets of the Rig-Veda, as well as in Confucius and Sakya-Muni; and the role of this Indian apostle of the New Dispensation was to proclaim his true and universal meaning. For after the Son came the Spirit and "this Church of the New Dispensation . . .is altogether an institution of the Holy Spirit" and completes the Old and the New Testaments.

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[60] "Here you have the complete triangular figure of the Trinity. The apex is the very God Jehovah. . . . From Him comes down the Son . . . and touches one end of the base of humanity . . . and then by the power of the Holy Ghost drags up degenerate humanity to himself. Divinity coming down to humanity is the Son, Divinity carrying humanity to heaven is the Holy Ghost; this is the whole philosophy of salvation. The Creator, the Exemplar, and the Sanctifier, I am, I love, I save; the Still God, the Journeying God, the Returning God . . ."—Keshab. (Cf. the treatises of classical Catholic mysticism.)

"The action whereby the Father engenders the Son is well explained by the term issuing or coming out . . . *Exivi a Patre.* The Holy Spirit is produced by the return way. . . . It is the divine way and subsists in God whereby God returns to himself. . . . In the same way we come out of God by the creation, which is attributed to the Father by the Son, we return to him by grace, which is the attribute of the Holy spirit."

(P. Claude Séquenot: Conduite d'Oraison . . . 1634, quoted by Henri Brémond: La Metaphysique des Saints. I. pp. 116-117.)

Surprising though it may seem, Keshab knew the Berullian or Salesian philosophy of prayer. (a) In a note of June 30, 1881, on the renunciation of John the Baptist, he quotes letters of François de Sales to Madame de Chantal.

(a) Berullian or Salesian,—that is to say belonging to Bérulle or François de Sales, great French Catholic mystics of the XVIIth century.

And so no part of this Himalayan theism was lost in spite of rude shocks from above and below, which might well have undermined its citadel. By a violent effort of thought, Keshab achieved the incorporation of Christ within it, and covered his own New Dispensation with the name of Christ, believing that he was called to reveal the real meaning of Christ to Western Christianity.

This was the avowed object of Keshab's last message before his death, Asia's message to Europe (1883). "Sectarian and carnal Europe, put up into the scabbard the sword of your narrow faith: Abjure it and join the true Catholic and universal Church in the name of Christ the Son of God: . . ."

"Christian Europe has not understood one half of Christ's words. She has comprehended that Christ and God are one, but not that Christ and humanity are one. That is the great mystery, which the New Dispensation reveals to the world: not only the reconciliation of Man with God; but the reconciliation of man with man: . . . Asia says to Europe, "Sister, Be one in Christ: . . . All that is good and true and beautiful—the meekness of Hindu Asia, the truthfulness of the Musulman and the charity of the Buddhist —all that is holy is of Christ. . . ."

And the new Pope of the new Rome in Asia intones the beautiful Song of Atonement.[61]

But he was a real Pope, and the unity of reconciled mankind had to be according to his doctrine; in order to defend it he always kept the thunderbolt in his hand, and he refused all compromise on the subject of the unitheistic principle—The Unity of God.

"Science is one. The Church is one."

His disciple; B. Mozoomdar, makes him use the denunciatory words of Christ, but more violently.

"There is only one way. There is no backdoor into heaven. He who enters not by the front door is a thief and a robber."

This is the antithesis of the smiling words of kindness uttered by Ramakrishna.[62]

The innate need of unitarian discipline which does not tally with religious universalism, and often unwittingly merges into spiritual imperialism led Keshab at the end of his life to lay down the code of the New

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[61] "And the new song of Atonement is sung with enthusiasm by millions of voices, representing all the various languages of the world, millions of souls, each dressed in its national garb of piety and righteousness, glowing in an infinite and complete variety of colours, shall dance round and round the Father's throne, and peace and joy shall reign for ever."

[62] One day when the young Naren (Vivekananda) denounced certain religious sects with his customary impatience, because their practices roused his furious disgust, Ramakrishna looked at him tenderly and said, "My boy, there is a backdoor to every house. Why should not one have the liberty to enter into a house by that if one chooses to? But, of course, I agree with you that the front entrance is the best."

And the biographer of Ramakrishna adds that these simple words "modified his Puritanical view of life, which he as a Brahmo had held. Sri Ramakrishna taught Naren how to regard mankind in the more generous and truer light of weakness and of strength (and not of sin or virtue)." (Life of Vivekananda, Vol. I, chapter XLVII.)

Samhita[63] (September 2, 1883), containing what he calls "the national law of the Aryans of the New Church in India . . . God's moral law adapted to the peculiar needs and character of reformed Hindus, and based upon their national instincts and traditions." It contains in effect a national unitarianism—One God, one scripture, one baptism, one marriage—a whole code of injunctions for the family, for the home, for business, for study, for amusement, for charity, for relationships, etc. But his code is a purely abstract one for an Indian that had not yet come into existence, and whose advent is doubtful.

Was he himself sure that it would ever come? The entire edifice of voluntary reason rested on uncertain foundations, on a nature divided between East and West. When illness came[64] the cement was loosened. To whom was his soul to belong, Christ or Kali? On his death-bed Ramakarishna, Devendranath his old master to whom he was now reconciled, and the Bishop of Calcutta all visited him. On January 1, 1884 he went out for the last time to consecrate a new sanctuary to the Divine Mother, but on January 8 his death-bed was enveloped in the words of a hymn sung at his own request by one of his disciples about Christ's agony in Gethsemane.

It was impossible for a nation of simple souls to find their way amid such a constant mental oscillation. But it makes Keshab nearer and more appealing to us, who can study his most intimate thoughts and can see the mental torture accompanying it. It is also true, that the kind and penetrating vision of Ramakrishna understood better than anybody else the hidden tragedy of a being exhausting itself in searching after God, whose body was the prey of the unseen God.[65] But has a born leader any right, even if he keeps his anguish to himself, to yield to such oscillations in his very last hours? They were his legacy to the Brahmo Samaj; and though they enriched its spirit they weakened its authority in India for a long time, if not for ever. We may well ask with Max Müller [66] whether the logical outcome of this theism was not to be found in Christianity; and that is exactly what Keshab's friends and enemies felt immediately after his death.

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[63] Samhita means collection or miscellany.

[64] Diabetes, one of the scourges of Bengal, of which Vivekananda also died.

His obsequies united in common grief the official representatives of the best minds both of England and of Westernised India. "He was the chain of union between Europe and India;" and the chain once broken, could not be resoldered. None of the subsequent moral and religious leaders of India have so sincerely given their adherence to the heart and spirit of the thought and the God of the West.[67] Hence Max Müller could write, "India has lost her greatest son." But the Indian Press, while unanimous in acclaiming his genius, was forced to admit that "the number of his disciples was not in accordance with his desert." [68]

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[65] I shall have more to say about the last touching visit of Ramakrishna to Keshab and the profound words he poured out like balm on the hidden wounds of the dying man.

[66] Max Müller in 1900 asked Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar who had taken Keshab's place at the head of the Brahmo Samaj and who shared the "Christocentric" ideas of his master, why the Brahmo did not frankly adopt the name Christian and did not organize itself as a national Church of Christ. The idea found a response in P. C. Mozoomdar himself and a group of his young disciples. One of them, Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, deserves a special study, for he has left a great memory. He passed from the Church of the New Dispensation to the Anglican and eventually to the Roman Catholic Communion. Another is Manilal C. Parekh, the biographer of Keshab, also a convert to Christianity. Both are convinced that if Keshab had lived several years longer he would have entered the Roman Church. Manilal Parekh says "that he was a Protestant in principle and a Catholic in practice . . . Christian in spirit, inclining to Monatism (faith in the supremacy of the Holy Spirit). "For myself I believe that Keshab was one of those who would have remained at the threshold of the half open door. But it was fatal that his successors opened the door wide.

He was in fact too far away from the deep-seated soul of his people. He wished to raise them all at once to the pure heights of his intellect, which had been itself nourished by the idealism and the Christ of Europe. In social matters none of his predecessors, with the exception of Roy, had done so much for her progress; but he ran counter to the rising tide of national consciousness, then feverishly awakening. Against him were the three hundred million gods of India and three hundred million living beings in whom they were incarnate—the whole vast jungle of human dreams wherein his Western outlook made him miss the track and the scent. He invited them to lose themselves in his Indian Christ, but his invitation remained unanswered, They did not even seem to have heard it.

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[67] *The Indian Empire* saluted in him "the best product of English education and Christian civilisation in India." And *The Hindu Patriot,* "the noble product of the education and the culture of the West."

From the Indian point of view such praise was its own condemnation.

[68] *The Hindu Patriot.* In 1921 the total number of the members of the three Brahmo Samajas was not more than 6,400 (of which 4,000 were in Bengal, Assam and Behar-Orissa), a minute number in comparison to the members of the Arya Samaj, of which I shall speak later, or of the new sects purely mystical, such as the Radhasvami-Satsang.

Indian religious thought raised a purely Indian Samaj against Keshab's Brahmo Samaj and against all attempts at Westernisation, even during his lifetime, and at its head was a personality of the highest order, Dayananda Sarasvaty[69] (1824-1883.)

This man with the nature of a lion is one of those, whom Europe is too apt to forget when she judges India, but whom she will probably be forced to remember to her cost; for he was that rare combination, a thinker of action[70] with a genius for leadership, like Vivekananda after him.

While all the religious leaders of whom we have already spoken and shall speak in the future were and are from Bengal, Dayananda came from quite a different land, the one which half a century later gave birth to Gandhi—the North-West coast of the Arabian Sea. He was born in Gujarat at Morvi in the state of Kathiawar, of a rich family belonging to the highest grade of Brahmins,[71] no less versed in Vedic learning than in mundane affairs, both political and commercial. His father took part in the Government of the little native state. He was rigidly orthodox according to the letter of the law with a stern domineering character, and this last to his sorrow he passed on to his son.

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[69] His real name, abandoned by himself, was Mulshanker. Sarasvaty was the sur-name of his Guru, whom he regarded as his true father. For Dayananda's life it is necessary to consult the classical book of Lajput Rai (the great nationalist Indian leader, who has just died): and *the Arya Samaj,* with an introduction by Sidney Webb, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1915.

[70] But although the energy of the two men, the immense power of their preaching and their irresistible attraction for the masses were equal, in Vivekananda's case there was the additional fascination of profundity of soul, the desire for pure contemplation, the bent of the inner being towards constant flights against which the necessity for action had always to struggle. Dayananda did not know this tragic division of soul. Nevertheless he was all that was required for the task he had to accomplish.

[71] Samavedi, the highest order of Brahmins in the Veda.

As a child Dayananda was therefore brought up under the strictest Brahmin rule, and at the age of eight was invested with the sacred thread and all the severe moral obligations entailed by this privilege rigourously enforced by his family.[72] It seemed as if he was to become a pillar of orthodoxy in his turn, but instead he became the Samson, who pulled down the pillars of the temple;—a striking example among a hundred others of the vanity of human effort, when it imagines that it is possible by a superimposed education to fashion the mind of the rising generation and so dispose of the future. The most certain result is revolt.

That of Dayananda is worth recording. When he was fourteen his father took him to the temple to celebrate the great festival of Shiva. He had to pass the night after a strict fast in pious vigil and prayer. The rest of the faithful went to sleep. The young boy alone resisted its spell. Suddenly he saw a mouse nibbling the offerings to the God and running over Shiva's body. It was enough. There is no doubt about moral revolt in the heart of a child. In a second his faith in the idol was shattered for the rest of his life. He left the temple, went home alone through the night, and thenceforward refused to participate in [73] the religious rites.

It marked the beginning of a terrible struggle between father and son. Both were of an unbending and autocratic will which barred the door to any mutual concession. At nineteen Dayananda ran away from home to escape from a forced marriage. He was caught and imprisoned. He fled again, this time for ever (1845). He never saw his father again.

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[72] The vows of Brahmacharya, chastity, purity, poverty throughout student life, and the obligation to recite the Vedas daily, and to live according to a whole system of regular and very strict rites.

[73] At the present time this night is kept as a festival by the Arya Samaj.

For fifteen years this son of a rich Brahmin, despoiled of everything and subsisting on alms, wandered as a Sadhu clad in the saffron robe along the roads of India. This again seems like a first edition of Vivekananda's life and his pilgrimage as a young man over the length and breadth of Hindustan. Like him Dayananda went in search of learned men, ascetics, studying here philosophy, there the Vedas, learning the theory and practise of Yoga. Like him he visited almost all the holy places of India and took part in religious debates. Like him he suffered, he braved fatigue, insult and danger, and this contact with the body of his fatherland lasted four times longer than Vivekananda's experience. In contradistinction to the latter, however, Dayananda remained far from the human masses through which he passed, for the simple reason that he spoke nothing but Sanskrit throughout this period. He was indeed what Vivekananda would have been if he had not encountered Ramakrishna and if his high aristocratic and Puritan pride had not been curbed by the indulgent kindness and rare spirit of comprehension of this most human of Gurus. Dayananda did not see, did not wish to see, anything round him but superstition and ignorance, spiritual laxity, degrading prejudices and the millions of idols he abominated. At length about 1860 he found at Mathura an old Guru even more implacable than himself in his condemnation of all weakness and his hatred of superstition, a Sannyasin blind from infancy and from the age of eleven quite alone in the world, a learned man, a terrible man, Swami Virjananda Saraswaty. Dayananda put himself under his "discipline" [74] which in its old literal XVIIth century sense scarred his flesh as well as his spirit. Dayananda served this untamable and indomitable man for two and a half years as his pupil. It is therefore mere justice to remember that his subsequent course of action was simply the fulfilment of the will of the stern blind man, whose surname he adopted, casting his own to oblivion. When they separated Virjananda extracted from him the promise that he would consecrate his life to the annihilation of the heresies that had crept into the Puranic faith, to re-establish the ancient religious methods of the age before Buddha, and to disseminate the truth.

Dayananda immediately began to preach in Northern India, but unlike the benign men of God who open all heaven before the eyes of their hearers, he was a hero of the Iliad or of the Gita with the athletic strength of a Hercules,[75] who thundered against all forms of thought other than his own, the only true one. He was so successful that in five years Northern India was completely changed. During these five years his life was attempted four or five times—sometimes by poison. Once a fanatic threw a cobra at his face in the name of Shiva, but he caught it and crushed it. It was impossible to get the better of him; for he possessed an unrivalled knowledge of Sanskrit and the Vedas,[76] while the burning vehemence of his words brought his adversaries to naught. They likened him to a flood. Never since Sankara had such a prophet of Vedism appeared. The orthodox Brahmins, completely overwhelmed, appealed from him to Benares, their Rome. Dayananda went there fearlessly, and undertook in November 1869 a Homeric contest. Before millions of assailants, all eager to bring him to his knees, he argued for hours together alone against three hundred pandits—the whole front line and the reserve of Hindu orthodoxy.[77] He proved that the Vedanta as practised was diametrically opposed to the primitive Vedas. He claimed that he was going back to the true Word, the pure Law of two thousand years earlier. They had not the patience to hear him out. He was hooted down and excommunicated. A void was created round him, but the echo of such a combat in the style of the Mahabharata spread throughout the country, so that his name became famous over the whole of India.

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[74] Discipline in the ecclesiastical language of an earlier age meant not only supervision, but the instrument used by ascetics to scourge themselves.

[75] His exploits have become legendary. He stopped with one hand a carriage with two runaway horses. He tore the naked sword out of an adversary's hand and broke it in two, etc. His thunderous voice could make itself heard above any tumult.

At Calcutta, where he stayed from December 15, 1872 to April 15, 1873, Ramakrishna met him. He was also cordially received by the Brahmo Samaj—Keshab and his people voluntarily shut their eyes to the differences existing between them; they saw in him a rough ally in their crusade against orthodox prejudices and the millions of gods. But Dayananda was not a man to come to an understanding with religious philosophers imbued with Western ideas. His national Indian Theism, its steel faith forged from the pure metal of the Vedas alone, had nothing in common with theirs, tinged as it was with modern doubt, which denied the infallibility of the Vedas and the doctrine of transmigration.[78] He broke with them [79] the richer for the encounter, for he owed them [80] the very simple suggestion, whose practical value had not struck him before, that his propaganda would be of little effect unless it was delivered in the language of the people. He went to Bombay, where shortly afterwards his sect, following the example of the Brahmo Samaj but with a better genius of organisation, proceeded to take root in the social life of India. On April 10, 1875 he founded at Bombay his first Arya Samaj, or Association of the Aryans of India, the pure Indians, the descendants of the old conquering race of the Indus and the Ganges. And it was exactly in those districts that it took root most strongly. From 1877, the year when its principles were definitely laid down at Lahore, to 1883, Dayananda spread a close network over Northern India, Rajputana, Gujarat, the United Provinces of Agra and Oude, and above all in the Punjab, which remained his chosen land. Practically the whole of India was affected. The only Province where his influence failed to make itself felt was Madras.[81]

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[76] "A very learned Sanskrit scholar," is the opinion of a man, himself a master of exegesis of the Hindu Scriptures, Aurobindo Ghose. (Cf. Arya Review, No. 4, Pondicherri, November 15, 1914; The Secret of the Veda.)

[77] A Christian missionary present at this tournament has left an excellent and impartial account of it, reproduced by Lajput Rai in his book. (*Christian intelligence,* Calcutta, March 1870).

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[78] These two according to Lajput Rai, himself affiliated to the Arya Samaj, are "the two cardinal principles which distinguish the Arya Samaj from the Brahmo Samaj."

It must be remembered that twenty years before Dayananda, (1844-46), Devendranath had also been tempted by the faith in the infallibility of the Vedas, but that he had renounced it in favour of direct and personal union with God. He was, it is said, of all the chiefs of the Brahmo Samaj the one nearest to Dayananda. But agreement was impossible. Devendranath, whose ideal was peace and harmony, could have no real sympathy with this perpetual warrior, armed with hard dogmatism and applying methods of pure scholasticism to the most modern social conflicts.

[79] In 1877 a last attempt was made to find a basis of agreement between the religious leaders and their divergent doctrines. Keshab and Dayananda met again, but agreement was impossible, since Dayananda would yield nothing.

[80] To Babu Keshab Chunder Sen.

He fell, struck down in his prime, by an assassin. The concubine of a Maharajah, whom the stern prophet had denounced, poisoned him. He died at Ajmer on October 30, 1883.

But his work pursued its uninterrupted and triumphant course. From 40,000 in 1891 the number of its members rose to 100,000 in 1901, to 243,000 in 1911, and to 468,000 in 1921.[82] Some of the most important Hindu personalities, politicians and Maharajahs, belonged to it. Its spontaneous and impassioned success in contrast to the slight reverberations of Keshab's Brahmo Samaj, shows the degree to which Dayananda's stern teachings corresponded to the thought of his country and to the first stirrings of Indian nationalism, to which he contributed.

It may perhaps be useful to remind Europe of the reasons at the bottom of this national awakening, now in full flood.

Westernisation was going too far, and was not always revealed by its best side. Intellectually it had become rather a frivolous attitude of mind, which did away with the need for independence of thought, and transplanted young intelligences from their proper environment, teaching them to despise the genius of their race. The instinct for self-preservation revolted. Dayananda's generation had watched, as he had done, not without anxiety, suffering, and irritation, the gradual infiltration into the veins of India of superficial European rationalism on the one hand, whose ironic arrogance understood nothing of the depths of the Indian spirit, and on the other hand, of a Christianity, which when it entered family life fulfilled only too well Christ's prophecy: "That He had come to bring division between father and son. . . ."

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[81] This is all the more striking since it was in Madras that Vivekananda found his most ardent and best organised disciples.

[82] Of whom 223,000 are in the Punjab and Delhi, 205,000 in the United Provinces, 223,000 in Kashmir, 4,500 in Behar. In short it is the expression of Northern India and one of its most energetic elements.

It is certainly not for us to depreciate Christian influences. I am a Catholic by birth, and as such have known the taste of Christ's blood and enjoyed the storehouse of profound life, revealed in the books and in the lives of great Christians, although I am outside all exclusive forms of church and religion. Hence I do not dream of subordinating such a faith to any other faith whatsoever; when the soul has reached a certain pitch—ocumen mentis [83]—it can go no further. Unfortunately the religion of one country does not always work upon alien races through its best elements. Too often questions of human pride are intermingled with the desire for earthly conquest, and, provided victory is attained, the view is too often held that the end justifies the means. I will go further and say that, even in its highest presentation, it is very rare that one religion takes possession of the spirit of another race in its deepest essence at the final pitch of the soul, of which I have just spoken. It does so rather by aspects, very significant no doubt, but secondary in importance. Those of us, who have pored over the wonderful system of Christian metaphysics and sounded their depths, know what infinite spaces they offer to the soaring wings of the spirit, and that the Divine Cosmos they present of the Being and the Love cleaving to Him is no whit less vast or less sublime than the conception of the Vedantic Infinite. But if a Keshab caught a glimpse of this, a Keshab was an exception among his people, and it would seem that Christianity is very rarely manifested to Hindus under this aspect. It is presented to them rather as a code of ethics, of practical action, as love in action, if such a term is permissible, and though this is a very important aspect, it is not the greatest.[84] It is a remarkable fact that the most notable conversations have taken place in the ranks of active and energetic personalities rather than in those of deep spiritual contemplation, of men capable of heroic flights of soul.[85]

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[83] To use the phrase of Richard de Saint-Victor and Western mystics to François de Sales. (Cf. Henri Brémond, *The Metaphysics of the Saints.*)

Whether this is true or not, and it provides an ample theme for discussion, it is a historic fact that when Dayananda's mind was in process of being formed, the highest religious spirit of India had been so weakened that the religious spirit of Europe threatened to extinguish its feeble flame without the satisfaction of substituting its own. The Brahmo Samaj was troubled by it, but was itself willy-nilly stamped with Western Christianity. Ram Mohun Roy's starting point had been Protestant Unitarian. Devendranath, although he denied it, had not the strength to prevent its intrusion into the Samaj, when he yielded the ascendancy to Keshab, already three parts given over to it. As early as 1880 one of Keshab's critics [86] could say that "those who believe in him have lost the name of theists, because they lean more and more towards Christianity." However precisely the position of the third Brahmo Samaj (the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj detached from Keshab) had been defined as against Indian Christianity, Indian public opnion could feel no confidence in a church undermined by two successive schisms within the space of half a century, and threatened, as we have seen, during the next half century with complete absorption in Christianity.

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[84] I myself, independently and intuitively belong to the side of Salesian Theocentrism, as represented by M. Henri Brémond in a recent polemic against the religious moralism or anti-mysticism of M. l'Abbé Vincent. (Cf. *op. cit.* Vol. I. pp. 26-47.)

[85] The Sadhu Sundar Singh, whose name is well-known in Europe among Protestants, is a good example. A Punjab Sikh, the Son of a Sirdar and Brother of a commander in the army, this intrepid man, delighted in seeking and braving martyrdom in Tibet, where he found traces of other Christian martyrs belonging to the two warlike races, the Sikhs and the Afghans. (Cf. Max Schaerer: *Sadhu Sundar Singh,* 1922, Zurich.) To judge of him from this pamphlet, it would appear that in speaking of the other religions of India, he had never penetrated to the core of their thought.

The enthusiastic reception accorded to the thunderous champion of the Vedas, a Vedist belonging to a great race and penetrated with the sacred writings of ancient India and with her heroic spirit, is then easily explained. He alone hurled the defiance of India against her invaders. Dayananda declared war on Christianity and his heavy massive sword cleft it asunder with scant reference to the scope or exactitude of his blows. He put it to the test of a vengeful, unjust and injurious criticism, which fastened upon each separate verse of the Bible and was blind and deaf to its real, its religious, and even its literal meaning, (for he read the Bible in a Hindi translation and in a hurry). His slashing commentaries,[87] reminiscent of Voltaire and his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* have unfortunately remained the arsenal for the spiteful anti-Christianity of certain modern Hindus.[88] Nevertheless, as Glasnapp rightly remarks, they are of paramount interest for European Christianity, which ought to know what is the image of itself as presented by its Asiatic adversaries.

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[86] Cf. Frank Lillington: *The Brahmo and the Arya in their relations to Christianity*, 1901.

[87] Contained in his great work, written in Hindi, *Satyartha-Prakash* (The Torch of Truth.)

Dayananda had no greater regard for the Koran and the Puranas, and trampled underfoot the body of Brahman orthodoxy. He had no pity for any of his fellow countrymen, past or present, who had contributed in any way to the thousand year decadence of India, at one time the mistress of the world.[89] He was a ruthless critic of all who, according to him, had falsified or profaned the true Vedic religion.[90] He was a Luther fighting against his own misled and misguided Church of Rome;[91] and his first care was to throw open the wells of the holy books, so that for the first time his people could come to them and drink for themselves. He translated and wrote commentaries on the Vedas in the vernacular[92]—it was in truth an epoch-making date for India when a Brahmin not only acknowledged that all human beings have the right to know the Vedas, whose study had been previously prohibited by orthodox Brahmans, but insisted that their study and propaganda was the duty of every Arya.[93]

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[88] Notably the neo-Buddhists, for difficult though it is to believe the beautiful name of Buddha, originally symbolising the spirit of detachment and universal peace, is well on the way in these days to become the standard of an aggressive propaganda having scant respect for other beliefs.

[89] His panorama of Indian History is an interesting one, a kind of impassioned Discourse of Universal History, to allude to a celebrated work of Bossuet of the XVIIth century. It traces the origin of humanity and the domination of India over the entire globe (including America and the Oceanic Islands; for according to him, the Nagas (serpents) and the infernal spirits of the legends are the people of the Antipodes; just so the struggles with the Asuras and the Rakshasas mean the wars with the Assyrians and the negroids). Dayananda replaces the whole of Mythology upon the earth. He dates all the misfortunes of India and the ruin of the great spirit of the Vedas to the wars of ten times a Hundred Years, sung by the Mahabharata, wherein heroic India destroyed herself. . . . He is filled with hatred, not only against the materialism which resulted, but against Jainism, the suborner. For him Sankara was the glorious though unfortunate hero of the first war of Hindu independence in the realm of the soul. He wished to break the bonds of heresy, but he failed. He died by assassination in the midst of his campaigns for freedom, but he himself remained caught by Jainistic decoys, particularly by Maya, which inspired in Dayananda—no dreamer of dreams but a man firmly implanted in the soil of reality an invincible repugnance.

[90] He called all idolatry a sin, and considered that divine incarnations were absurd and sacrilegious.

[91] He scourged the Brahmins with the name of "Popes."

[92] Between 1876 and 1883 he directed a whole train of Pandits. He wrote in Sanskrit and the pandits translated into the dialects. He alone, however, translated the original text. His translation, which he had no time to revise, is always preceded by a grammatical and etymological analysis of each verse, followed by a commentary explaining the general sense.

[93] Article III of the Ten Principles of Lahore (1877): "The Vedas are the book of true knowledge. The first of every Arya is to learn them and to teach them."

By a strange accident Dayananda concluded a political alliance lasting several years (1879-1881) with a Western community, destined for a great work, the Theosophical Society, on the basis of his vindication of the Vedas agains tthe rising flood of Christianity. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in the South of India by a Russian, Mme. Blavatsky, and an American, Colonel Olcott, and had the great merit of stimulating the Hindus to study their sacred Texts, especially the Gita and the Upanishads, six volumes of which Colonel Olcott published in Sanskrit. It also headed the movement for the establishment of Indian schools, especially in Ceylon, and even dared to open schools for "untouchables." It therefore contributed to the national, religious, and social awakening of India; and Dayananda seemed about to make common cause with it. But when the Society took him at

It is true that his translation was an interpretation, and that there is much to criticise with regard to accuracy[94] as well as with regard to the rigidity of the dogmas and principles he drew from the text, the absolute infallibility claimed for the one book, which according to him had emanated direct from the "prehuman" or superhuman Divinity, his denials from which there was no appeal, his implacable condemnations, his theism of action, his credo of battle,[95] and finally his national God.[96]

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his word and offered him its regular co-operation, he refused its offer, thereby taking away from the Theosophical Society all chance of spiritual dominion over India. It has since played a secondary part, but has been useful from the social point of view, if the establishment in 1889 of the Central Hindu College at Benares is to be attributed to the influence of Mrs. Besant. The Anglo-American element, preponderant in its strange mixture of East and West has twisted in a curious way the vast and liberal system of Hindu metaphysics by its spirit of noble but limited pragmatism. Further it must be added that it has given itself a kind of pontifical and infallible authority, allowing of no appeal, which though veiled is none the less implacable, and has appeared in this light to independent minds such as that of Vivekananda, who, as we shall see, on his return from America categorically denounced it.

On this subject there is an article by G. E. Monod Heraen, written in its favour: An Indo-European Influence, the Theosophical Society. (Feuilles de l'Inde, No. 1. Paris, 1928), and a brilliant, comprehensive, and malicious chapter by Count H. Von Keyserling in his Travel Diary of a Philosopher, 1918.

[94] But not his passionate loyalty, which remains proof against all attack. The extreme difficulty of the task must also be taken into consideration at a time when a knowledge of the philosophy of the Vedas was much rarer in India that at the present time.

[95] Among rules to be followed as set down at the end of his Satyartha Prakash, Dayananda orders: "Seek to combat, to humiliate, to destroy the wicked, even the rulers of the world, the men in power. Seek constantly to sap the power of the unjust and to strengthen that of the just, even at the cost of terrible sufferings, of death itself, which no man should seek to avoid."

[96] "The Samaj will glorify, pray to and unite with the One and only God, as shown by the Vedas. . . . The conception of God

But in default of outpourings of the heart and the calm sun of the spirit, bathing the nations of men and

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and the objects of the Universe is founded solely on the teachings of the Veda and the other true Shastras," which he enumerated.

It is, however, curious (so strong was the current of the age setting at all cost towards unity) that Dayananda's nationalism like the unitarianism of Roy and Keshab had universal pretentions.

"The well-Being of humanity as a whole ought to be the objective of the Samaj." (Principles of the first Arya Samaj of 1875).

"The primary object of the Samaj is to do good to the whole world by bettering the physical, spiritual and social condition of humanity." (Principles of the Arya Samaj of Lahore, revised in 1875).

"I believe in a religion based on universal principles and embracing all that has been accepted as truth by humanity and that will continue to be obeyed in the ages to come. This is what I call religion: Eternal primitive Religion, (for it is above the hostility of human beliefs). . . . That alone which is worthy to be believed by all men and in all ages, I hold as acceptable." (Satyartha Prakash).

Like all impassioned believers, but in perfect good faith, he confounds the conception of the eternal and universal "Truth," which he claimed to serve, with that of the faith he decreed. He was careful to submit the criterion of truth to five preliminary tests, the first two in conformity with the teachings of the Vedas and to the definitions he had laid down concerning the nature of God and His attributes. How could he doubt his right to impose the Vedas upon humanity as a whole, when he started by decreeing that they contained, as Aurobindo Ghose says, "an integral revelation of religious truth, both ethical and scientific? According to him the Vedic gods were nothing but impersonations describing the one Divinity, and names of his powers, such as we see them in the works of Nature. True knowledge of the meaning of the Vedas corresponds then to the knowledge of scientific truths discovered by modern research." (Aurobindo Ghose: *The Secret of the Veda,* Arya Review, No. 4. November 15, 1914, Pondicherry).

Dayananda's national exegesis of Vedism let loose a flood of pamphlets, whose object was to restore and reawaken the philosophies, cults, rites and practices of ancient India. There was a passionate reaction of antique ideals against the ideas of the West. (Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata,* November, 1928.)

their gods in its effulgence,—in default of the warm poetry radiating from the entire being of a Ramakrishna or the gradiose poetic style of a Vivekananda, Dayananda transfused into the languid body of India his own formidable energy, his certainty, his lion's blood. His words rang with heroic power. He reminded the secular passivity of a people, too prone to bow to fate, that the soul is free and that action is the generator of destiny.[97] He set the example of a complete clearance of all the encumbering growth of privilege and prejudice by a series of hatchet blows. If his metaphysics were dry and obscure,[98] if his theology was narrow and in my opinion retrograde, his social activities and practises were of intrepid boldness. With regard to questions of fact he went further than the Brahmo Samaj, and even further than the Ramakrishna Mission ventures to-day.

His creation, the Arya Samaj, postulates in principle equal justice for all men and all nations, together with equality of the sexes. It repudiates a hereditary caste system, and only recognises professions or guilds, suitable to the complimentary aptitudes of men in society; religion was to have no part in these divisions, but only the service of the state, which assesses the tasks to be performed. The state alone, if it considers it for the good of the community, can raise or degrade a man from one caste to another by way of reward or punishment. Dayananda wished every man to have the opportunity to acquire as much knowledge as would enable him to raise himself in the social scale as high as he was able. Above all he would not tolerate the abominable injustice of the existence of untouchables, and nobody has been a more ardent champion of their outraged rights. They were admitted to the Arya Samaj on a basis of equality; for the Aryas are not a caste. "The Aryas are all men of superior principles; and the Dasyas are they who lead a life of wickedness and sin."

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[97] "An energetic and active life is preferable to the acceptance of the decrees of destiny. Destiny is the outcome of deeds. Deeds are the creators of destiny. Virtuous activity is superior to passive resignation. . . ."

"The soul is a free agent, free to act as it pleases. But it depends on the grace of God for the enjoyment of the fruit of its actions." (Satyartha Prakash).

[98] Dayananda distinguishes, it seems, three eternal substances —God, the Soul and Prakriti, the material cause of the universe. God and the Soul are two distinct entities: they have attributes which are not interchangeable and each accomplishes certain functions. They are, however, inseparable. The Creation, the essential exercise of Divine energy, is accomplished over primordial elements, which it combines and orders. The terrestrial bondage of the soul is caused by ignorance. Salvation is emancipation from error and the attainment of the freedom of God. But it is only for a time, at the end of which the soul retakes another body . . . etc." *(ibid. passim.)*

Dayananda was no less generous and no less bold in his crusade to improve the condition of women, a deplorable one in India. He revolted against the abuses from which they suffered, recalling that in the heroic age they occupied in the home and in society a position at least equal to men. They ought to have equal education,[99] according to him, and supreme control in marriage over household matters including the finances. Dayananda in fact claimed equal rights in marriage for men and women, and though he regarded marriage as indissoluable, he admitted the remarriage of widows, and went so far as to envisage a temporary union for women as well as for men for the purpose of having children, if none had resulted from marriage.

Lastly the Arya Samaj, whose eighth principle was

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[99] In marriage the minimum age was to be sixteen for girls and twenty-five for boys. Dayananda was resolutely opposed to infant marriage.

"to diffuse knowledge and dissipate ignorance," has played a great part in the education of India. Especially in the Punjab and the United Provinces it has founded a host of schools for girls and boys. Their labourious hives are grouped round two model establishments:[100] the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College of Lahore and the Gurukula of Kangri, national bulwarks of Hindu education, which seek to resuscitate the energies of the race and to use at the same time the intellectual and technical conquests of the West.[101]

To these let us add philanthropic activities, such as orphanages, workshops for boys and girls, homes for widows, and great works of social service at the time of public calamities, epidemics, famine, etc., and it is obvious that the Arya Samaj is the rival of the future Ramakrishna Mission.[102]

I have said enough about this rough Sannyasin with the soul of a leader, to show how great an uplifter of the peoples he was—in fact the most vigorous force of the immediate and present action in India at the moment of the rebirth and reawakening of the national consciousness. His Arya Samaj, whether he wished it or no,[103] prepared the way in 1905 for the revolt of Bengal to which we shall allude again. He was one of the most ardent prophets of reconstruction and of national organisation. I feel that it was he who kept the Vigil; but his strength was also his weakness. His purpose in life was action and its object his nation. For a people lacking the vision of wider horizons the accomplishment of the action and the creation of the nation might perhaps be enough. But not for India—before her will still lie the universe.

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[100] This was our information ten years ago at the date of the publication of Lajput Rai's book. From that date the educational movement has probably continued to expand.

[101] The Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College of Lahore, opened in 1886, combines instruction in Sanskrit, Hindi, Persian, English, Oriental and European Philosophy, History, Political Economy, Science, arts and crafts. The Gurukula is a school founded in 1902, where the children take the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience for sixteen years. Its object is to reform Aryan character by Hindu Philosophic and literary culture, vivified by moral energy. There is also a great college for girls in the Punjab, where feminine subjects and domestic economy are united to intellectual studies and the knowledge of three languages, Sanskrit, Hindu and English.

[102] It would appear that in this respect Vivekananda and his disciples have outstripped him. The first activities of social service noted by Lajput Rai as undertaken by the Arya Samaj, were help in the famine of 1897-1898. From 1894 onwards one of Vivekananda's monks, Ajhandananda, devoted himself to works of social service. In 1897 part of the Ramakrishna Mission was mobilised against famine and malaria, and the following year against the plague.

[103] He forbade it in public; he always claimed to be non-political and non-anti-British. But the British Government judged differently. The Arya Samaj found itself compromised by the activity of its members. It was one of them, Lajput Rai, whose arrest provoked the most serious risings of 1907-8. And it should be recalled here that the same Lajput Rai, the nationalist hero of India, constantly imprisoned, exiled, persecuted, recently died at Lahore (December 1928) as the result of a collision with the British police during demonstrations in favour of Indian political independence.

VII

RAMAKRISHNA AND THE KING-SHEPHERDS OF INDIA

Such then were the great shepherds of the people, the king pastors of India, at the moment when the star of Ramakrishna appeared in cloudless glory above the mountains.[1]

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[1] I have only mentioned the greatest. There were many others. India has never lacked messengers of God, founders of sects or religions, and they were continually appearing throughout the period. In the recent treatise by Helmuth von Glasenapp: *Religiöse Reformbewegungen in heutigen Indien,* (1928, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrich, Morgenland collection) there is an account of the two most curious: the Atheistic Church of the Superman, the Dev-Samaj, and the Mystical Church of the Divine Sound (or Word), the Radhasvami-Satsang. The question is of the mysterious word which stands for the Almighty Being (and which is no longer the famous Vedic *O M* delegated to an inferior place)—the Divine Sound that vibrates through the Universe—the spoken harmony, whence is derived the "Music of the Spheres" (to quote the old language of Greco-Roman antiquity). It is to be found under rather a different form in the mysticism of the Maitrayani Upanishad. They are not included here because they belong to rather a later date. The Dev-Samaj, though founded in 1887 by Shiva Narayana Agnihotra only adopted the name, "Superhuman" atheism after 1894; and its violent struggle against God, fought in the name of reason, morality and science, by a "Superman," the Dev-Guru (the founder in person), whose initial step was to make himself the object of worship, is to-day in full swing. As for the Radhasvami-Satsang, founded by a trinity of successive, but indistinguishable holy Gurus, whose deaths occurred in 1878, 1898 and 1907 respectively, it is only since the end of the last century that their doctrine has become firmly established. We need not therefore take it into consideration in this account. The seat of the Dev-Samaj is at

Naturally he could not have known the first of these four men, the forerunner, Ram Mohun Roy, but he knew the other three personally. He first visited them, urged by that overwhelming thirst for God, which made him always ask himself—Are there no more of His wells, which these have found and from which I have not drunk? But his practised eye judged them at sight. His critical faculties were never abrogated. As he leant over them to taste them with thirsty devotion, he often laughed mischievously, and rose with the words that his own were better. He was not the man to be dazzled by outward show, glory or eloquence. His veiled eye did not blink unless the light he sought, the face of God Himself, shone from the depths. They could penetrate through the walls of the body as through a window-pane and searched the very heart with eager curiosity. But what they found there sometimes provoked a sudden quiet outburst of hilarity untinged with malice from this indiscreet visitor.

The story of his visit to the imposing Devendranath

Lahore, and almost all its adherents are in the Punjab. The two chief centres of the Radhasvami-Satsang are Allahabad and Agra. Hence it is to be noted that both belong to Northern India. Glasenapp says nothing of the appearance of new religions in Southern India, but they were no less numerous. Such was the religion of the great Guru, Sri Narayana, whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the state of Travancore over some million faithful souls (he has just died in 1928). His doctrine was impregnated with monist metaphysics of Sankara, but tended to practical action showing very marked differences from Bengal mysticism, whose Bhakta effusions filled him with mistrust. He preached, if one may say so, a Jnanin of action, a great intellectual religion, having a very lively sense of the people and their social needs. It has greatly contributed to the uplifting of the oppressed classes in Southern India and its activities have in a measure been allied to those of Gandhi. (Cf. Articles by his disciple, P. Natarajan in the *Sufi Quarterly*, Geneva, December, 1928 and the following months.)

Tagore, as told by himself, is a titbit of comedy, wherein the critical humour and the disrespectful respect of the "little brother" towards the great pontiff, the "King Janaka," have free play.

"Is it possible," a questioner asked him one day,[2] "to reconcile the world and God? What do you think of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore?"

Ramakrishna repeated softly, "Devendranath Tagore . . . Devendranath . . . Devendra . . ." — and he bowed several times. Then he said,

"Do you know what he is? Once upon a time there was a man, whose custom it was to celebrate the feast of Durga Puja with great pomp. Goats were sacrificed from morning till night. After some years the sacrifice lost its brilliancy. Somebody asked the man why it was so greatly reduced, and the man replied, 'I have lost my teeth now!'

"And so," continued the irreverent story-teller, "it is quite natural that Devendranath should practise meditation at his advanced age." [3]

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[2] Keshab Chunder Sen. The conversation is reported by an eye-witness, A. Kumar Dutt. *(Life of Ramakrishna.)*

[3] It must be admitted that Ramakrishna's irony did Devendranath a grave injustice. It did not take into account, probably through ignorance, the absolute disinterestedness of the Maharshi and his years of noble and difficult sacrifice. In this I see the attitude of a man of the people to a great aristocrat.

Another account, given by Sashi Bhusan Ghosh in his Memoirs written in Bengali (pp. 245-7) lessens the irony without diminishing the penetration of Ramakrishna, so that justice is better done to the royal idealist.

Ramakrishna said that he was introduced to Devendranath with the words, "Here is a mad man of God!" "Devendranath seemed to me to be concentrated upon his own ego, but why should he not have been so concentrated, when he enjoyed so much knowledge, renown, riches and unanimous respect? But I discovered that Yoga and bhoga (material enjoyment) ran side by side in his life. . . . I said to him, 'You are a true Janaka in

He paused. . . . "But," he added, bowing once more, "He is undoubtedly a very illustrious man. . . ."

Then he recounted his visit.[4]

"At first when I saw him, I thought him rather proud. Oh! It was natural! He was overwhelmed by so many good things: nobility, prestige, riches. . . . Suddenly I found myself in the state when I can see through a man. Then I consider the greatest, the richest, the most learned men as straw, if I do not see God. . . . And a laugh escaped me . . . for I discovered that this man at the same time enjoyed the world and led a religious life. He had many children, all young. So in spite of his being a great Jnanin, he had to reconcile himself to the world. I said to him, 'You are the King Janaka of our day.'[5] He belonged to the world and yet he attained the highest realisations. You are in the world, but your spirit rests on the heights of God. Tell me something of Him!"

Devendranath recited to him some beautiful passages

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this age of sin. Janaka was wont to see both sides at once. So you have kept your soul for God, while your body moves in the material world. That is why I have come to see you. Tell me something about God!' . . ."

[4] Rabindranath Tagore was then four years old. Ramakrishna was introduced by his patron, Mathur Babu, who had been a fellow student of Devendranath. A curious detail of the visit may interest our European psycho-physiologists. Hardly were the introductions over than Ramakrishna asked Devendranath to undress and show him his chest. Devendranath complied without showing much astonishment. The colour of the skin was scarlet, and Ramakrishna examined it. This persistent redness of the breast is a peculiar sign of the practice of certain Yoga. Ramakrishna never omitted to examine the breast of his disciples, their breathing capacity, and the soundness of their circulation before allowing or forbidding them to undertake exercises of great concentration.

[5] Janaka, the King of Videha and Mithila, the foster-father of Sita.

from the Veda,[6] and the interview proceeded on a tone of familiar courtesy. Devendranath was much struck by the fire in the eyes of his visitor, and he invited Ramakrishna to a feast for the next day. But he begged him to "cover his body a little," if he wished to be present: for the little pilgrim had not put himself to the trouble of dressing up. Ramakrishna replied with wicked good fellowship that he could not be depended upon; he was as he was, and would come as he was. So they parted very good friends. But early the next morning a very polite note came from the great aristocrat, begging him not to put himself to any trouble. And that was the end. With one caressing stroke of the paw aristocracy remained aloof, secure in its paradise of idealism.

Dayananda was summed up, judged and condemned as of less worth still. It must be admitted that when the two men met at the end of 1873, the Arya Samaj had not yet been founded and the reformer was still in the midst of his career. When Ramakrishna examined him,[7] he found in him "a little power," by which he meant, "real contact with the Divine." But the tortured and torturing character, the bellicose athleticism of the champion of the Vedas, his feverish insistence that he alone was in the right, and therefore had the right to impose his will, were all blots on his mission in Ramakrishna's eyes. He saw him day and night disputing concerning the Scriptures, twisting their meaning, and striving at all costs to found a new sect. But such preoccupation with personal and worldly success sullied the true love of God, and so he turned away from Dayananda.

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[6] "This universe is to be likened to a candelabra. And each one of us is a bulb. If we do not burn the whole candelabra becomes dark. God has created man to celebrate His glory. . . ."

In Sashi's account Ramakrishna made this naive reflection:

"It is strange! While I was meditating in the Panchavati (the grove of Dakshineswar), I also saw an image like a candelabra . . . Devendranath must really be a very profound man!"

[7] He recognised in him also this characteristic redness of the breast. During one of Ramakrishna's interviews as noted by Mahendra Nath Gupta *(the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)* on November 28, 1883, a singular statement with regard to Dayananda is attributed to Ramakrishna. He had heard that Dayananda, burning to measure himself against Keshab Chunder Sen on the subject of his Vedic Gods, in whom Keshab did not believe, cried out, "The Lord has done so many things! Can He not also have made the Gods?" This was not in accordance with the views

His relations with Keshab Chunder Sen were of quite a different order. They were intimate, affectionate, and lasting.

Before speaking of them I must express regret that the disciples of the two masters have left us such prejudiced accounts. Each side has been at considerable pains to "vassalise" the other man of God in favour of its own saint. Ramakrishna's disciples still speak of Keshab with sympathetic regard, and thank him for the homage he yielded to the Paramahamsa. But some of Keshab's disciples cannot forgive Ramakrishna for the ascendancy, real or apparent, he exercised over their master; hence in order to deny that any such influence could have existed, they have reverted to the plan of raising between them insurmountable barriers of thought; they scornfully misrepresent Ramakrishna's true worth, and their harmful spite is also di-

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publicly professed by Dayananda, the implacable enemy of polytheism. Was Dayananda's exclamation inexactly reported to Ramakrishna, or did it refer, not to the Gods, but to the Vedic sacrificial fire, which Dayananda believed in on the ground of faith in the infallible Vedas? I cannot explain this apparent contradiction.

rected against the man who preached his Gospel, and made it victorious, Vivekananda.[8]

But having read certain beautiful and fresh pages by Keshab, wherein the ideas and actions of Vivekananda are distinctly foreshadowed, I can well understand that the Brahmos chafe under the silence and oblivion into which the Ramakrishna Mission has allowed them to fall. So far as lies in my power, I shall try to amend this injustice; for I believe it to be unwitting. But certain Brahmos could not worse uphold Keshab's memory than by confining him within their own narrow limits and by putting in the shade the disinterested affection felt by Keshab for Ramakrishna. In the whole of Keshab's life, so worthy of respect and affection, there is nothing more deservedly dear to us than the attitude of respect and affection adopted from the first by this great man at the height of his fame and climax of his thought, and maintained until the end, towards the Little Poor Man of Dakshineswar, then either obscure or misrepresented. The more the Brahmos attempt, their pride hurt by the familiarities of the "madman of God" with the prince of intellectuals, to extract from the writings of Keshab proud denunciations of disordered ecstasy, such as they attribute to Ramakrishna,[9] the more striking is the contrast of Keshab's actual relations to Ramakrishna.

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[8] I have in mind chiefly the pamphlet of B. Mozoomdar: *Professor Max Müller on Ramakrishna; The World on K. Chunder Sen, 1900,* Calcutta, (Cf. Chapter II, Absurd Inventions and Reports made to Max Müller by the Disciples of Ramakrishna; Chapter III, Differences between the Two Doctrines; and above all the insulting Chapter V, Concerning Vivekananda, the Informant of Max Müller, which does not scruple to join forces with some Anglo-American clergymen, lacerated by the thunderous religious polemics of the great Swami.)

[9] Cf. B. Mozoomdar, *op. cit.* Chapter II. In his treatise on Yoga Keshab says: "Knowledge and Bhakti are interchangeable terms. Bhakti is only possible in those who have knowledge, an

If it is true that Keshab, unlike most of the religious men of India, never took a Guru, an intermediary between himself and the Divinity,[10] so that nobody has the right to say that he was a disciple of Ramakrishna, as is claimed by the Ramakrishnites—his generous spirit was ever ready to appreciate greatness, and his love of truth was too pure for vanity to have any part in it. Hence this teacher was ever ready to learn,[11]

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unknowing Bhakta is an impossibility." But this does not condemn the religious ecstasies of Ramakrishna; for first it would be necessary to prove that a higher form of knowledge was not contained therein. It merely marks the different character of Keshab's contemplations; for him the highest condition consisted in a union of mind with the Eternal, wherein practical intelligence was not obscured in the midst of the manifold occupations of life, society and the home. Keshab's views were in accordance with the spiritual traditions of the Brahmo Samaj. Further in Chapter III Mozoomdar quotes Keshab as saying, "Fie a hundred times to the Yogin, if he abandons everything for the love of Yoga! . . . It is a sin to abandon those whom God has given us to cherish." He claims to find in these words a reference to Ramakrishna as having neglected his duties towards his wife. But it is untrue to say that he neglected them. Not only did he love his wife with a profound and pure love, but he knew how to inspire her with a love, which for her was a source of peace and happiness. I have already shown how seriously he took his responsibilty to her, and that he did not allow his disciples to give up duties they had already contracted to old parents, to wife or children dependent upon them in order to follow him.

[10] "From the beginning of my religious life," he wrote, "I have been ever wont to receive instruction from Thee, my God. . . ."

[11] I have been happy to find the same point of view that I have adopted, in the beautiful book illumined by the faith of Manilal C. Parekh, a Christian disciple of Keshab, (*Brahmarshi Keshab Ch. Sen,* 1926 Oriental Christ House, Rajkot, Bombay). Manilal C. Parekh clearly recognises that Keshab owed much to Ramkrishna, probably more than Ramkrishna owed to him. But, like myself, he sees in it another reason for admiring the largeness of his spirit and greatness of his heart.

and said of himself, "I am a born disciple . . . all objects are my masters. I learn from everything." [12] How then can he have failed to learn from the Man of God?

During the early months of 1875 Keshab happened to be with his disciples at a villa near Dakshineswar. Ramakrishna went to visit him [13] with the words,

"I hear you have seen a vision of God, I have come to find out what it is."

Thereupon he began to sing a famous hymn to Kali, and in the midst of it he fell into an ecstacy. Even for Hindus this was an extraordinary sight; but Keshab, who, as we have seen, was sufficiently suspicious of such rather morbid manifestations of devotion, would hardly have been struck by it, if, on coming out of Samadhi at the instance of his nephew,[14] Ramakrishna had not forthwith launched into a flood of magnificent words regarding the One and Infinite God. His ironic good sense appeared even in this inspired outpouring, and it struck Keshab very forcibly. He charged his disciples to observe it. After a short time he had no doubt that he was dealing with an exceptional personality, and in his turn went to seek it out. They became friends. He invited Ramakrishna to the ceremonies of his Brahmo Samaj; and used to come to take him from his temple for excursions on the Ganges; and since his generous soul was obliged to share his discoveries with others, he spoke everywhere of Ramakrishna, in his sermons, and in his writings for journals and reviews, both in English and in the native languages. His own fame was put at Ramakrishna's disposal and it was through Keshab that his reputation, until then unknown to the popular religious masses with a few exceptions, spread in a short time to the intellectual middle class circles of Bengal and beyond.

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[12] But he says also; "God has implanted in me the power to aspire to the good qualities of every man."

[13] He had noticed him as early as 1865, when young Keshab was Devendranath's lieutenant at the head of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Keshab's face had struck him. It was not the kind that is easily forgotten. Keshab was tall, his face oval, "his complexion clear like that of an Italian" (Mukerji). But if his spirit, like his face, was tinged by the tender sun of the West, the depths of his soul remained Indian. Ramkrishna, watching him as he meditated, was not mistaken. "On the platform of the Brahmo Samaj several people were meditating," he says of his visit in 1865. "In the centre of the group was Keshab lost in contemplation; he was as motionless as a piece of wood. He was then quite a young man; but it was at his bait that the fish was nibbling . ." (a familiar metaphor meaning that God was responding to his appeal alone).

[14] For the interest of European science, it is to be noted that the only method of recalling Ramakrishna from his ecstatic trances was to pronounce in his ear such or such a name of the Lord, or some Mantra (form of prayer), differing according to the degree and the form of the ecstasy. The character of psychic concentration was then very marked; and it was impossible to speak of any initial physiological disorder; the spirit always remained in full control.

The modesty shown by the noble Keshab, the illustrious chief of the Brahmo Samaj, rich in learning and prestige, in bowing down before this unknown man, ignorant of book learning and of Sanskrit, who could hardly read and who wrote with difficulty, is truly admirable. But Ramakrishna's penetration confounded him and he sat at his feet as a disciple.

But this is not to say that Keshab was the disciple of Ramakrishna, as is claimed by some over-zealous followers of the latter. It is not true that any one of his essential ideas were derived from him; for they were already formed when he met Ramakrishna for the first time. We have seen that after 1862 he began to conceive of the harmony of religions and their original unity. He said in 1863 "All truths are common to all, for all are of God. Truth is no more

European than Asiatic, no more yours than mine." In 1869 in the course of a lecture on the future church, he visualised all religions as a vast symphony, wherein each one, while keeping its distinctive character, the tone of its instrument, the register of its voice, united to praise God the Father and Man the Brother in one universal anthem. On the other hand, it is false to claim that Keshab needed Ramakrishna's help to arrive at his conception of the Mother—a conception common to all ages in India, as that of the Father in the West. Ramakrishna did not create it. The hymns of Ramprasad, stored within his memory, sing Her in all keys. The idea of God's maternity had been incorporated in the Brahmo Samaj during the pontificate of Devendranath. Keshab's disciples have no difficulty in citing invocations to the Mother all through the work of their Master.[15]

Undoubtedly the twin ideas of the Divine Mother and the brotherhood of Her worshippers were beautiful ones, whatever the forms of their ritual and means of expression, and, as ideas, they were already possessed by Keshab and revivified by his sincere faith. But it was another thing to find them alive and vital in a Ramakrishna! The Little Poor Man was not troubled by theories; he simply *was*. He *was* the communion of the Gods with believers; he *was* the Mother and Her lover; he saw Her; She was seen through him; She could be touched. What a discovery this genius of heart, who communicated to those coming into contact with him the warm breath of the Goddess and the shelter of Her beautiful arms, was to Keshab, and how deeply he must have felt its impact: for he too was a Bhakta, a believer through love:[16]

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[15] 1862; when Keshab was still the minister of the Adi Brahmo Samaj of Devendranath, a hymn was sung, "Sitting on the knees of the Mother."

1866; Manual of the Brahmo Samaj, "O Divine Mother, bind me by thy mercy . . . O Mother, come, draw near!"

1875: "Happy am I! I have been merged in the heart of the Mother, I am now among her children; the Mother dances with her children . . ."

(But before this last date the meeting of Keshab and Ramakrishna had taken place. Cf. B. Mozoomdar, *op. cit.* Chapter III.)

"The sweet, simple, charming and childlike nature of Ramakrishna coloured the Yoga of Keshab and his immaculate conception of religion," wrote Chiranjib Sarma, one of his biographers.

And one of the missionaries of Keshab's church, Babu Girish Chundra Sen,[17] wrote,

"It was from Ramakrishna that Keshab received the idea of invoking God by the sweet name of Mother with the simplicity of a child. . . ."[18]

Only the last quotation needs comment; for we have shown that Keshab did not wait for Ramakrishna before invoking the Mother. Ramakrishna, however, brought him a renewal of love and immediate certitude, the heart of a child. Hence it was not the discovery of the "New Dispensation" that Keshab began to preach in the same year, 1875, that his path crossed Ramakrishna's,[19] but rather an irresistable outpouring of faith and joy which made him cry his message to the world.

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[16] Promotho Loll Sen says that he communed daily with God. "Let prayer be your chief preoccupation! Pray ardently and without ceasing, alone and together, let it be the alpha and omega of your life!"

[17] *The Life and Teachings of the Paramahamsa Ramakrishna,* Article in *the Dharmatatwa.*

[18] Babu Chirish Chundra Sen and Chiranjib Sarma, quoted by the Ramakrishnites in support of their thesis, certainly exaggerated the influence of Ramakrishna on Keshab's Brahmo Samaj. Those who try to prove too much lay themselves open to suspicion. To write like Chiranjib Sarma that "The worship of God as Mother was due to Ramakrishna," is a contradiction of the facts. It is quite enough to say that Ramakrishna's example developed it in the Brahmo Samaj. The Brahmo cult was rather hard. "The shadow of Ramakrishna," to use a simile of Babu Girish Ch. Sen, "softened it."

Ramakrishna was a wonderful stimulant for the Brahmos, a tongue of flame dancing at Pentecost over the heads of the apostles, burning and enlightening them. He was at once their sincere friend and their judge, who spared neither his affection nor his mischievous criticism.

When he first visited the Brahmo Samaj his penetrating and amused glance had seen through the rather conventional devotion of its excellent members. According to his own humourous account,[20]

"The leader said: 'Let us communicate with Him.' I thought, 'They will now go into the inner world and stay a long time.' Hardly had a few minutes passed when they all opened their eyes. I was astonished. Can anyone find Him after so slight a meditation? After it was all over, when we were alone, I spoke to Keshab about it: 'I watched all your congregation communing with their eyes shut. Do you know what it reminded me of? Sometimes at Dakshineswar I have seen under the trees a flock of monkeys sitting, stiff and looking the very picture of innocence. . . . They were thinking and planning their campaign of robbing certain gardens of fruits, roots, and other edibles . . . in a few moments. The communing that your followers did with God to-day is no more serious!"

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[19] Nevertheless Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, in his sympathetic life of Keshab admits, that the meeting with Ramakrishna, without altering the essentially theistic character of the New Dispensation, led Keshab to present it in a more conciliatory and easily accessible form.

Ramakrishna "had gathered the essential conceptions of Hindu polytheism into an original structure of eclectic spirituality. . . . This strange eclecticism suggested to Keshab's appreciative mind the thought of broadening the spiritual structure of his own movement. . . . The Hindu conceptions of the Divine attributes spontaneously recommended themselves as beautiful and true, and also as the surest means of making his faith intelligible and acceptable in the land. Of course he kept the simple universal basis of theism intact." But Mozoomdar adds with regret that such a presentation of theism with a multiplicity of Divine attributes has since been exploited in favour of popular idolatry.

[20] Cf. Dhan Gopal Mukerji; *The Face of Silence,* 1926. (Saradananda gives a similar account in his chapter on the Brahmo Samaj & Ramakrishna.)

In a ritual hymn of the Brahmo Samaj this verse occurs;

"Think of Him and worship Him at every instant of the day!" Ramakrishna stopped the singer, and said,

"You should alter the verse into 'Pray to Him and worship Him only twice a day.' Say what you really do. Why tell fibs to the Infinite?"

The Brahmo Samaj of Keshab, while it extolled faith, did so in a purposely stilted, abstract and solemn tone, reminiscent of the Anglican. It seemed to be always on guard against any suspicion of idolatry.[21]

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[21] Here is a type of Brahmo prayer, quoted in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna:* "Om! Thou art our Father, Give us knowledge! Do not destroy us! "Om! Brahman: Truth: Knowledge: Infinite: He is Bliss and Immortality: He shines: He is Peace: He is the Good: He is the One: "We bow before Thee, O Supreme Being, O First Great Cause: . . . We bow before Thee, O Light of Knowledge, O Support of all the worlds: "From the unreal lead us to the real: From darkness lead us to light: From death lead us to Immortality: Reach us through & through our self: And ever more protect us, O Thou Terrible, by Thy Sweet compassionate Face:"

Ramakrishna took a mischievous delight in accusing it, not without justice, of mild idolatry. One day he heard Keshab in prayer enumerating all the perfections of the Lord.

"Why do you give these statistics," he asked him. "Does a son say to his father, 'O my father, you possess so many houses, so many gardens, so many horses, etc.?' It is natural for a father to put his resources at the disposal of his son. If you think of Him and His gifts as something extraordinary, you can never be intimate with Him, you cannot draw near to Him. Do not think of Him as if He were far away from you. . . . Think of Him as your nearest: Then He will reveal Himself to you. . . . Do you not see that if you go into an ecstasy over His attributes, you become an idolator?" [22]

Keshab protested against this attack on a sensitive point; he declared that he hated idolatry, that the God he worshipped was a formless God. Ramakrishna answered quietly,

"God is with form and without form. Images and other symbols are just as valid as your attributes. And these attributes are no different from idolatry, but are merely hard and petrified forms of it."

And again,

"You wish to be strict and partial. . . . For myself I have a burning desire to worship the Lord in as many ways as I can; nevertheless my heart's desire has never been satisfied. I long to worship with offerings of flowers and fruits, to repeat His holy name in solitude, to meditate upon Him, to sing His hymns, to dance in the joy of the Lord: . . . Those who believe that God is without form attain Him just as well as those who believe He has form. The only two essentials are faith and self-surrender. . . ." [23]

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[22] Life of Sri Ramakrishna. P. 365 & Mukerji.

I can copy the colourless words, but I cannot communicate the real presence, the radiance of person, the tone of voice, the look in the eyes and the captivating smile. Nobody who came in contact with them could resist them. It was above all his living certitude that impressed the onlookers; for with him words were not, as with others, a loose and ornamental robe, hiding as much as they claimed to reveal of the unfathomable depths of life; with him the depths of life blossomed, and God, Who for the majority even of religious men, is a frame of thought drawing an impenetrable veil across "The Unknown Masterpiece," [24] was to be seen in him; for as he spoke he lost himself in God, like a bather who dives and reappears dripping after a moment, bringing with him the smell of seaweed, the taste of the salt of the Ocean. Who can rid himself of its tang? The scientific spirit of the West can indeed analyse it. But whatever its elements, its synthetic reality was never in doubt. The greatest sceptic can touch the diver as he returns from the depths of the Dream, and catch some reflection of submarine flora in his eyes. Keshab and several of his disciples were intoxicated with it.

The strange dialogues of this Indian Plato, delivered on Keshab's yacht as it went up and down the Ganges,[25] deserve to be read. Their narrator, afterwards Ramakrishna's evangelist, was the first to be astonished that such a meeting could have come about between such opposite types of mind. What common ground could there be between the man of God and the man of the world, the great intellectual, the Anglomaniac Keshab, whose reason condemned the Gods? Keshab's disciples pressed round the two sages at the porthole of the cabin, like a swarm of flies. And as the honey of his words began to flow from Ramakrishna's lips, the flies were drowned in its sweetness.

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[23] Mukerji.

[24] Allusion to a celebrated novel of the great French writer, Balzac.

[25] Two of them are to be found in an account by M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta), the author of the *Gospel of Ramakrishna,* dated October 27, 1882. Another witness, Nagendranath Gupta gives an account of another interview in 1881. (Cf. *The Modern Review,* Calcutta, May, 1927.)

"It is now more than forty-five years ago that this happened and yet almost everything that the Paramahamsa said is indelibly impressed on my memory. I have never heard any other man speak as he did. . . . As he spoke he would draw a little closer to Keshab until part of his body was unconsciously resting on Keshab's lap, but Keshab sat perfectly still and made no movement to withdraw himself."

Ramakrishna looked with affectionate intensity on the faces surrounding him, and described their moral character one by one, as delineated in their features, first the eyes, then the forehead, the nose, the teeth, and the ears; for they formed a language to which he had the key. As he spoke with his sweet and attractive stammer he came to the subject of the Nirakara Brahman, the formless God.

"He repeated the word Nirakara two or three times and then quietly passed into Samadhi as the diver slips into fathomless deep. . . . We watched him intently. The whole body relaxed and then became slightly rigid. There was no twitching of the muscles or nerves, no movement of any limb. Both his hands lay in his lap with the fingers lightly interlocked. The sitting posture of the body was easy but absolutely motionless. The face was slightly tilted up and in repose. The eyes were nearly but not wholly closed. The eyeballs were not turned up or otherwise deflected, but they were fixed. . . . The lips were parted in a beatific and indescribable smile, disclosing the gleam of the white teeth. There was something in that wonderful smile which no photograph was ever able to reproduce." [26]

He was recalled to the world by the singing of a hymn. . . .

"He opened his eyes and looked around him as if he were in a strange place. The music stopped. The Paramahamsa looking at us said, 'Who are these people?' And then he vigourously slapped the top of his head several times, and cried out, 'Go down, go down:' . . . The Paramahamsa became fully conscious and sang in a pleasant voice (a hymn of Kali)."

He sang the identity of the Divine Mother with the Absolute. He sang the joy of the flying kite of the soul, launched by the Mother while She keeps it attached to Her by the string of Illusion.[27]

"The world is the Mother's plaything. It is Her pleasure to let slip from Illusion one or two flying kites among the thousands. It is Her sport. She says to the human soul in confidence with a wink of the eye; 'Go and live in the world until I tell you to do something else: . . .' "

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[26] Nagendranath Gupta.

In another ecstasy, the one described by M., Ramakrishna spoke to the Mother: "O Mother, they are all fastened inside their bars. They are not free; is it possible to loose them from their prison?"

[27] The metaphor of the flying kite is to be found, as we have seen in a hymn of Ramprasad, which Ramakrishna loved to sing: "The Divine Mother and the Liberated Soul." It is also used in a hymn of Nareschandra quoted in the *Gospel.* Nearly all the metaphors, particularly that of the diver to the depths of the Ocean of Life, are used again and again with variations in the poetic and musical folklore of Bengal from the XVth Century onwards.

And in imitation of Her he turned to the disciples of Keshab with an indulgent irony that made them laugh.

"You are in the world. Stay there: It is not for you to abandon it. You are very well as you are, pure gold and alloy, sugar and treacle. . . . We sometimes play a game in which one must gain seventeen points to win. I have passed the limit and I have lost. But you clever people, who have not won enough points, can still continue to play. . . . In truth it matters little if you live in the family or in the world, so long as you do not lose contact with God."

And it was in the course of these monologues, wherein observation and ecstasy, mocking common sense and highest speculation were so wonderfully blended, that the Paramahamsa produced his beautiful parables, quoted above, of the Divine Tank with several ghats (steps) and of Kali, the Spider. He had too keen a sense of reality, he saw too clearly to the very bottom of his listeners, to imagine that he could raise them to the heights of his own liberated soul. He measured their wisdom and their capacity, and he asked nothing of them beyond their capability, but he asked for the whole of that: above all he communicated to Keshab and his disciples the spirit of life, the creative breath, coupled with a wide and intellectual tolerance, which recognised the truth in quite diverse points of view, previously considered by them to be irreconcilable. He freed their intellectual limbs, petrified within the groove of reason, and made them supple. He tore them from their abstract discussions. "Live, love and create:" and blood again flowed through their veins.

"To create is to be like God," he said to Keshab, who was then spending himself in endless and fruitless polemics. "When you yourself are filled with the essence of existence, all that you say will come true. Poets in all ages have praised truth and virtue. But does that make their readers virtuous or truthful? When a man despoiled of self comes among us, his acts are the very pulses of the heart of virtue; all that he does to others makes even their most humdrum dreams greater, so that all they touch becomes true and pure; they become the father of reality.[28] And what he creates never dies. That is what I expect of you. Make the dogs of invective keep quiet. Let the elephant of Being sound the clarion trumpet of his benediction over all living things: You possess this power. Are you going to use it, or are you going to waste this brief span called life in fighting other peoples?" [29]

Keshab listened to his advice and took deep root in this warm living earth, bathed in the sap emanating from the Universal Being. Ramakrishna made him feel that no particle of this sap was ever lost, even in the most humble plant of human thought. His mind was sympathetically reopened to all other forms of faith, even to certain outward practises, which he had avoided.

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[28] Cf. Gandhi, who was averse to all religious propaganda by word or writing. When he was asked, "How then can we share our experience with others?" he replied, "Our spiritual experiences are necessarily shared and communicated whether we suspect it or not, but by our lives and our examples, not by our words, which are a very inadequate vehicle. Spiritual experiences are deeper than thought itself. By the very fact that we live, spiritual experience will overflow. But if you deliberately set yourself to share your spiritual experience with another, you raise an intellectual barrier between you." (Discussions at the Council of the Federation of International Fellowship, Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, January 15, 1928.)

[29] Mukerji.

He was to be seen invoking by their names Shiva, Shakti, Sarasvaty, Lakshmi, Hari, identifying God's attributes with them. For two years he was absorbed in each of the great religious types, the heroic incarnations of the Spirit: Jesus, Buddha, Shaitanya, each representing one side of the Great Mirror. He sought to assimilate them each in turn, so that through their synthesis he might realise the universal ideal. During his last illness he was especially drawn to that form of Bhakti most familiar to Ramakrishna—a passionate love of the Mother. Keshab's disciples told Ramakrishna, when he came to see him during his last days on earth that "a great change had taken place." "Often we find him talking to the Divine Mother, waiting for Her and weeping." And Ramakrishna, enraptured by this news, fell into an ecstasy. There is nothing more touching in the whole account of this supreme interview [30] than the appearance of the dying Keshab, shaken by a mortal cough, holding on to the walls, supporting himself by the furniture, coming to cast himself at the feet of Ramakrishna. The latter was still half plunged in ecstasy, and was talking to himself. Keshab was silent, drinking in the mysterious words that seemed to come from the Mother Herself. They explained to him with ruthless but consoling tranquillity the deep meaning of his sufferings and his approaching death.[31] With what deep insight Ramakrishna understood the hidden confusion of this life of faith and restless love:

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[30] (*Gospel of Ramakrishna,* I, section V, chapters 1 and 2.)

It was on November 28, 1883 at the close of the day that Ramakrishna entered the house of Keshab with several of his disciples.

"You are ill," he said sweetly. "There is a profound meaning in that. Through your body have passed many deep waves of devotion seeking for the Lord. Your illness bears witness to these emotions. It is impossible to tell what damage they do to the organisms at the time they are produced. A boat passes along the Ganges without attracting attention. But some time afterwards a great wave, displaced by its passage, dashes against the bank and washes away part of it. When the fire of the Divine Vision enters the frail house of the body, it first burns the passions, then the false ego, and at last it consumes everything. . . . You have not yet reached the end. . . . Why did you allow your name to be inscribed on the registers of the Lord's hospital? You will never be allowed to come out until the word 'Healed' is written across them."

He then invoked the gracious parable of the Divine gardener digging round the roots of a precious rose tree, so that it might drink the night dew.[32]

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[31] Ramakrishna, hardly awakened from ecstasy, looked round at the drawing-room full of beautiful furniture and mirrors. Then he smiled and spoke to himself: "Yes, all these things have had their uses some time ago; but now they serve no purpose. . . . You are here, Mother. How beautiful you are: . . ." At this moment Keshab entered and fell at Ramakrishna's feet. "Here I am," he said. Ramakrishna looked at him without seeming to recognise him clearly, and continued his monologue about the Mother and human life. Between the two men not a word was spoken about Keshab's health, although it was the object of the visit. It was not until after some time that Ramakrishna uttered the words I have quoted above.

[32] "The Gardener knows how to treat the common rose, and how to treat the rose of Bassora. He loosens the earth round her

"Illness digs round the roots of your being."

Keshab listened in silence and smiled; for it was Ramakrishna's smile that shed a light of mysterious serenity into the funeral darkness of the house and into the sufferings of the sick man. Ramakrishna did not adopt a solemn tone until Keshab, exhausted, was about to leave him. Then he suggested to the dying man that he ought not to live so much in the inner room with the women and children, but alone with God.

And it is said that in his deep agony, Keshab's last words were, "Mother: . . . Mother: . . ."[33]

It is so easy to understand how this great idealist, who believed in God, Reason, Goodness, Justice and Truth, should have discovered during these tragic days that he was too far away from the High God, the Unattainable God, and that he needed to draw near to Him and to touch Him with the dust of Ramakrishna's

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roots, so that she may benefit from the night dew. The dew gives strength and freshness to the rose. It is even so with you. The Divine Gardener knows how to treat you. He digs round you right down to the roots, so that His dew may fall upon you, that you may become purer and your work greater and more enduring." (*Gospel of Ramakrishna,* Vol. I, section V Chapter, II.)

[33] The repercussion of some of Ramakrishna's words, spoken during his last interview with Keshab, on the latter's last thoughts, have, I think, never before been noticed.

Ramakrishna spoke to him for a long time about the Mother and said, "She watches over Her children. . . . She knows how to obtain true freedom and knowledge for them. . . . The child knows nothing. . . . Its Mother knows everything. . . . All is ordered according to Her will. 'You fulfil Your own will, O Divine Mother, and accomplish Your own work.' The foolish man says, 'It is I, who have accomplished.'"

Moreover, when Keshab in the midst of his own sufferings was consoling his real, his mortal mother, who had given him life, he said, "The Supreme Mother sends everything for my good. She plays with me, turning sometimes to one side, sometimes to the other."

feet, to see Him and hear Him through Ramakrishna, and find refreshment for his fever. Such is an expression of universal experience. But it is just this for which some of Keshab's proud disciples cannot forgive Ramakrishna. On the other hand, I must beg the Ramakrishnites not to make too much of it, but rather let them follow the example of their sweet Master. When Keshab had just left him after this last interview here described, Ramakrishna spoke modestly and with admiration of Keshab's greatness, which had won the respect both of a social and intellectual élite and of simple believers like himself. And he continued to show his esteem for the Brahmo Samaj.[34] The best of the Brahmos have held him in veneration in their turn,[35] and have known how to profit from their intercourse with him. His influence widened their understanding and their heart and did more than anybody else's to bring them into line in people's estimation with the best thought of India, which the first influx of the scientific knowledge of the West, badly assimilated had threatened to alienate.

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[34] In 1878 after the fresh schisms within the Bramo Samaj, Ramakrishna remained faithful to Keshab when he was deserted by a section of his disciples. But he refused to make any distinction between the three separate branches of the Brahmo Samaj joining them all alike in prayer. *The Gospel of Ramakrishna* has recorded several of these visits, in particular one of October 28, 1882, when he was invited and was present at the annual festival of Keshab's Brahmo Samaj. He was eagerly surrounded and questioned on religious problems, and replied with his usual breadth of spirit. He took part in the Songs (the song of Kabir), and in the sacred dances. When he retired he saluted all forms of devotion, ending up with homage to the Brahmo Samaj: "Salutations to the feet of the Jnanin: Salutations to the feet of the Bhakta: Salutations to the devout who believe in God with form: Salutations to the devout who believe in a God without form: Salutations to the ancient knowers of Brahman: Salutations to the modern knowers of the Brahmo Samaj:"

The other two branches of the Brahmo Samaj showed him far less regard. The most recent, the Sadharan Samaj, owed him a grudge on account of his influence over Keshab. At the Adi Brahmo Samaj of Devendranath he was doubtless regarded as belonging to a lower level. At one visit which he paid to it (May 2, 1883), and which Rabindranath Tagore may perhaps remember, since he was present as a lad, his reception was hardly courteous. (Cf. *Gospel of Ramakrishna.*)

One example will suffice; his great discipline, Vivekananda, came from the ranks of the Brahmo Samaj and from the most bigoted, at least for a time, of iconoclasts in the name of Western reason against Hindu tradition, which later he learnt to respect and defend. The true thought of the West has lost nothing through this Hindu awakening. The thought of the East is now independent, and henceforth union can be effected between equal and free personalities, instead of the one being subjugated by the other, and one of the two Civilisations being assassinated by the other.

[35] Especially Keshab's successor, Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, and Vijaya Krishna Gosvani, who later on separated himself from the Brahmo Samaj. The great composer and singer of Keshab's Samaj, Trailokya Nath Sanyal, maintains that many of his most beautiful songs were inspired by the ecstasies of Ramakrishna.

VIII

THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES

It is easy to see what India gained from the meeting of Ramakrishna and the Brahmo Samaj. His own gain is less obvious, but no less definite. For the first time he found himself brought into personal contact with the educated middle class of his country, and through them with the pioneers of progress and Western ideas. He had previously known practically nothing of their mentality.

He was not a man to react like a strict and narrow devotee who hastens to put up the shutters of his cell. On the contrary he flung them wide open. He was too human, too insatiably curious, too greedy for the fruit of the tree of life not to taste these new fruits to the full. His long searching glance insinuated itself, like a creeper through the chinks of the house, and studied all the different habitations of the same Host, and all the different spirits dwelling therein, and in order to understand them better, he identified himself with them. He grasped their limitations (as well as their significance), and proportioned to each nature its own vision of life and individual duty. He never dreamed of imposing either vision or action alien to his proper nature on any man. He, to whom renunciation both then and always, so far as he was personally concerned, was the first and last word of truth, discovered that most men would have none of it and he was neither astonished nor saddened by the discovery. The differences men busied themselves in raising between them, like hedges, seemed to him nothing but bushes all flowering in the same field and giving variety to the scene.[1] He loved them all. He could see the goal and the path assigned to each one of them, and pointed out to each the road he was to follow. When he spoke to an individual one of the things most astonishing to the onlookers was the way he instantaneously adapted just that individual's particular turn of phrase and method of expressing his thoughts. This was not mere versatility. His spirit kept firm control of the steering wheel, and if he led men to another point of the bank, it was always the bank of God. He helped them unawares to land by their own power. Because he believed that all nature was of God, he felt that it was his duty to guide each nature along its own lines so that it might attain its fullest development. The realisation that he possessed this gift of spiritual guidance came upon him without his own volition. A Western proverb, adopted as its motto by the Italian Renaissance, claims that *Vouloir c'est pouvoir.*[2] This is the bragging of youth with everything still to do. A more mature man, who is not so easily satisfied with words, but who lays emphasis on deeds, reverses the motto so that it reads: *"Pouvoir c'est vouloir."*[2]

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[1] Somebody once asked him what difference there was between the Brahmos and the other Hindus. "No very great one," he replied. In a concert of hautboys one holds on the same note while the others weave variations beneath it. The Brahmos always come back to the same note, the formless aspect of God. But the Hindus play his different aspects.

[2] "Vouloir c'est pouvoir" literally translated means: "To wish is to be able. Pouvoir c'est vouloir: to be able is to wish."

Ramakrishna suddenly perceived the power within him and the call of the world for its use. The ascendancy he exercised over some of the best minds in India revealed the weaknesses and needs of these intellectuals, their unsatisfied aspirations, the inadequacy of the answers they gained from science, and the necessity for his intervention. The Brahmo Samaj showed him what strength of organisation, what beauty existed in a spiritual group uniting young souls round an elder brother so that they tendered a basket of love as a joint offering to their Beloved, the Mother.

The immediate result was that his mission, hitherto undefined, became crystallised; it concentrated first in a glowing nucleus of conscious thought wherein decision was centred, and then passed into action.

First of all he saw in their entirety his own relations with God. He saw that this God within him [3] could not be satisfied with personal salvation, as was the case with other Sadhakas, but [4] required of him the

[3] Ramakrishna admitted at this point what the Bhairavi Brahmani had been the first to proclaim—that he was a Divine Incarnation. But he disliked to talk about it, and could not bear it to be mentioned in front of him. In general, praise was disagreeable to him. He was much more prone to refuse in public all spiritual privileges to the dissatisfaction of some of his followers, who would have liked a share in them. His conviction lay in an inward act, a secret light, which he never paraded. I would ask my Western readers a question that may shock them—whether the passionate conviction of a mission which imposes thought and action upon our great men is not vaguely akin to exactly some such intuition, some fullness of Being transcending the limits of personality? What does it matter by what name it is called?

[4] Sadhana is the practice of spiritual contemplation leading to one form of Realisation. Sadhaka is one dedicated to this practise.

love and service of mankind.[5] His spiritual struggles, his ecstasies, his realisations were not to be only for his own profit.

"Sic vos non vobis. . . ."[6]

They were meant rather to prepare the way for human development, for a new era of spiritual realisation. Other men had the right to aspire to and hope for liberation, but not he. He could not count on that. From century to century he was obliged to go to the help of mankind whenever they were in danger.[7]

And here is the rallying cry, the word of salvation that he was to carry to the men of his day.[8]

1. All religions are true in their essence and in the sincere faith of their believers. The revelation of this universal truth, whereat Ramakrishna had arrived by common sense as much as by intuition, was the special object of his coming upon the earth.

2. The three great orders of metaphysical thought: Dualism, "Qualified" Monism and absolute Monism, are the stages on the way to supreme truth. They are not contradictory, but rather are complimentary the one to the other. Each is the perspective offered

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[5] The word "service" inscribed by Ramakrishna's disciples above their mission was not explicitly pronounced by the Master. But his whole doctrine of love working for others to the limits of personal sacrifice is in essence the doctrine of service. Service, as Swami Ashokananda has well shown, is its motive force (Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata,* Almora, February, 1928, *The Origin of Swami Vivekananda's Doctrine of Service*). We shall return to this question in the next volume.

[6] A frequently quoted verse of Vergil, meaning: "You work, but not for yourself."

[7] As a curious fact I note here that Ramakrishna said, pointing to the northwest, that after two hundred years he would be reincarnated there. (Russia)

[8] Life of Ramakrishna p. 342-347.

to the mental standpoint of one order of individuals. For the masses, who are attracted through the senses, a dualistic form of religion with ceremonies, music, images and symbols is useful. The pure intellect can arrive at qualified Monism; it knows that there is a beyond; but it cannot realise it. Realisation belongs to another order, the Advaita, the inexplicable, the formless Absolute, of which the discipline of Yoga gives a foretaste. It surpasses the logical means of word and spirit. It is the last word of "Realisation." It is Identity with the One Reality.

3. To this scale of thought there is naturally a corresponding scale of duties. The ordinary man lives in the world and can and does fulfil his duties there, striving with affectionate zeal but without attachment to self, just as a good servant takes care of a house, although he is quite aware that the house is not his. By purity and love he is to achieve liberation from his desires. But only step by step with patience and modesty.

"Undertake only those tasks that are within the range of your thoughts and purified dreams. Do not flatter yourself that you can do big things, but fulfil duties as small in size as your self-renunciation to God. Then as your renunciation and purity grow (and things of the soul grow very quickly) they will pay their way across the material world and shed their light upon other men, just as the Ganges, having cut its channel through the hard rocks of the Himalayas, waters millions of places with its beneficence." [9]

"Do not be in a hurry, but progress each at his own pace: You are sure to arrive at your destination, so there is no need to run: but you must not stop: 'Religion is a path which leads to God, but a path is not a house.' . . . 'And will it be a long one?' 'That depends. It is the same for all. But some march for a longer time and the end draws near. . . .' "

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[9] Cf. D. G. Mukerji, *op. cit.*

"The potter dries his pots in the sun. Some are already baked, others not. The cattle pass on and tread them under foot. (Then comes death). . . . The potter picks up the pots again and if one is not quite baked he replaces it on the wheel; he does not let it go. But when the sun of God has completed your baking, the potter leaves the remains, now of no further use on the plane of Maya, except for one or two finished vessels to serve as models for humanity." [10]

Ramakrishna was one such, and his mission was to seek those who were a stage behind him [11] and with them, in fulfilment of the Mother's will, to found a new order of men, who would transmit his message and teach to the world his word of truth containing all the others. This word was "Universal"—the Union and Unity of all the aspects of God, of all the transports of love and knowledge, of all forms of humanity. Until then nobody had sought to realise more than one aspect of the Being. All must be realised. That was the duty of the present day. And the man who fulfilled it by identifying himself with each and all of his living brethren, taking unto himself their eyes, their senses, their brain and heart, was the pilot and the guide for the needs of the new age.[12]

No sooner had he perceived this vision than he was afire with the desire to realise it.[13] Like a bird-charmer he flung a passionate appeal into the air to other winged spirits to come and group themselves round his dovecote. The time was ripe. He could wait no longer. He must collect his covey round him. Night and day the thought of these beloved companions possessed him. He cried in his heart. . . .

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[10] Interview with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, December 6, 1884.

[11] He said: "to those who are in their last birth."

[12] Cf. Swami Ashokananda, *loc. cit.*

"My ardent desire knew no bounds. That very day for good or ill I had to realise it. I no longer listened to what was said round me. . . . They filled my mind. I could see them. I decided in advance what I should say to this one and that one. . . . By the end of the day the thought of them weighed upon me. . . . Another day had gone and still they had not come! . . . The clocks struck, the conches sounded. I went up onto the roof in the fading light and with bleeding heart cried aloud, 'Come my children: Where are you? I cannot live without you. . . .' I loved them more than mother, friend or lover; I desired them; I was dying in their absence."

This mighty cry of the soul soared up into the night like the sacred serpent; and its attraction was exerted over the winged spirits. From all directions, without understanding what command or what power constrained them, they felt themselves drawn, as if caught by an invisible thread; they circled, they approached and soon one after another they arrived.

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[13] It was revealed to Sri Ramakrishna about 1863 that many faithful and pure hearted souls would come to him. (Cf. Life of Ramakrishna, p. 203). But Ramakrishna had hardly given it a thought before 1866. According to Saradananda, it was at the end of the long Samadhi of that year that a violent desire for his future disciples came upon him. Every evening he prayed for their advent with loud cries. The climax of this crisis was towards the end of the next six years, (1866-1872), which further period was necessary for Ramakrishna to reach the height of his powers as a teacher, and to understand the spiritual condition of the India of his age. Towards the close of this period, in a vision his future disciples appeared to him. (Cf. Life of Vivekananda, I. 360.) He first began to preach at the end of 1874 or the beginning of 1875, when he made Keshab's acquaintance. His preaching may be considered to fall within the period of twelve years from 1874 to August, 1886.

The first disciples to present themselves (this was in 1879) were two middle class intellectuals from Calcutta. They were cousins: the one a medical student at the Calcutta Medical College, an absolute materialist and atheist: Ramchandra Dutt; the other married and the head of a family: Manomohan Mitra. Some lines in a Brahmo Samaj journal mentioning Ramakrishna had attracted their attention. They came and they were conquered. They did not renounce the world and Ramakrishna did nothing to detach them from it; but the extraordinary man captivated them by his charm and his character. It was they who brought him his two greatest disciples—the one who became the first abbot of the Ramakrishna Order, under the name of Brahmananda (Rakhal Chandra Ghosh), and he whose genius was to enlighten India and the whole world under the name of Vivekananda (Narendranath Dutt).

Before considering the chief personalities, here is a short list of the best known of the men, who between the years 1879 and 1885[14] grouped themselves round Ramakrishna, together with some indication of their birth and profession as far as it is possible to draw up:

1879: 1 and 2. Doctor Ramchandra Dutt and his cousin, Manomohan Mitra;

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[14] According to Saradananda, all Ramakrishna's disciples arrived before the end of 1884, and most of them between the middle of 1883 and the middle of 1884.

3. Latu, Ramchandra's servant, of low birth from Behar, later known by the monastic name of Adbhutananda;
4. Surendranath Mitra, a rich employer in an English trading house, a householder and member of the Brahmo Samaj;

1881: 5. Rakhal Chandra Ghosh, son of a Zemindar (landed proprietor), later the first abbot of the Order under the name of Brahmananda;

6. Gopal the elder, a paper merchant (later Advaitananda);
7. Narendranath Dutt, a young intellectual, belonging to a Kshatriya family, (later Vivekananda);

1882: 8. Mahendra Nath Gupta, the principal of the Vidyasagyr High School at Shambazar, Calcutta, who has since written the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* under the pseudonym M., and who, unless I am mistaken, directs the school he founded, the Morton Institution.

9. Tarak Nath Ghoshal, the son of a lawyer, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, the present abbot of the Order under the name of Shivananda;
10. Jogendra Nath Chaudhury, a Brahmin of Dakshineswar belonging to an aristocratic family (later Yogananda).

1883: 11. Sasibhurshan (later Ramakrishnananda):

12. Saratchandra Chakravarti (later Saradananda), the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission for more than a quarter of a century and the great biographer of Rama-

krishna, both Brahmins of Calcutta and members of the Brahmo Samaj;

13. Kaliprasad Chandra, the son of a professor of English, (later Abhedananda);
14. Narinath Chattopadhyaya, a Brahmin, (later Turiyananda);
15. Hariprasanna Chatterjee, a student (Vijnanananda);

1884: 16. Gangadhar Ghatak, a young student of fourteen, (later Akhandananda);

17. Girish Chandra Ghosh, a great actor and dramatist, the founder of the modern Bengal theatre, director of the Star Theatre at Calcutta;

1885: 18. Subodh Ghosh, a student of seventeen, the son of a founder of the temple of Kali at Calcutta, (later Subodhananda). I have not been able to find the exact dates for the entry of the following:

19. The rich proprietor, Balaram Bose, a mature and exceedingly pious man, whose gifts helped in the foundation of the Order;
20. The young spiritualistic medium, Nitya Niranjan Sen, whom Ramakrishna rescued by main force from occult beliefs,[15] and who was later Niranjanananda;
21. Devendra Mazundar, a mature, married man, an employé of a Zemindar and brother of the Bengal poet, Surendranath;
22. Baburam Gosh, a student about twenty years of age, (later Premananda);

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[15] "If you always think of ghosts, you will become a ghost. If you think of God, you will be God. Choose:"

23. Tulasi Charan Dutt, a student of eighteen, (later Nirmalananda).

. . . . etc. . . . .

It can be seen that with the exception of the poor servant, Latu, the majority belonged to the liberal professions, to the Brahmin aristocracy or to the rich middle class of Bengal. They were either young men or in the prime of life, and several had been fashioned by the Brahmo Samaj. But I have only mentioned those who joined Ramakrishna strictly and who were the exponents of his thought.

An ever shifting crowd of all classes and all castes inundated him with its restless movement. They came jumbled together, Maharajahs and beggars, journalists and pandits, artists, and devotees, Brahmos, Christians and Mohammedans, men of faith, men of action and business, old men, women and children. Often they journeyed from afar to question him, and there was no rest for him day or night. For twenty hours out of the twenty-four he replied to all comers. Although his weakened health failed under the strain, he refused nobody, but gave out to all alike his sympathy, his enlightenment, and that strange power of soul, which, even if he did not speak a word, gripped[16] the hearts of his visitors and left them transformed for days. He won the respect of all sincere believers, and gladly received men of different faiths so that they might discuss their diversities before him and he might reconcile them.

But this to him was only one of the factors making for harmony. He desired something infinitely greater than the reconciliation of warring creeds—that man as a whole should understand, sympathise with and love the rest of mankind—that he should identify himself with the life of humanity. For, since Divinity is inherent in every man, every life for him was a religion, and should so become for all. And the more we love mankind, however diverse, the nearer we are to God.[17] It was unnecessary to seek Him in temples, or to call upon Him for miracles and revelations. He was here, everywhere, every second. We could see Him, we could touch Him, for He was our brother, our friend, our enemy, our very self. And it was because this omnipresent God flowed from the soul of Ramakrishna, because his light illumined, quietly and imperceptibly, the crowd surrounding him, that men felt themselves, without understanding why, uplifted and strengthened.

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[16] "The force of a tiger," was the term used by certain witnesses of the gentle master, thus associating in a striking metaphor a savage impression of vital power and freedom of soul.

He said to his disciples,

"We must build on different foundations from the makers of religions. We must live an inner life so intense that it becomes a Being. The Being will give birth to innumerable torches of truth. . . . Rivers flow because their parent, the mountain, remains immovable. . . . Let us raise a mountain of God in the midst of humanity. It matters little where and when. When it has been raised, it will continue to pour forth rivers of light and compassion over mankind for ever." [18]

There was then no question of founding or of expounding a new creed:

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[17] "Are you seeking God? Then seek Him in man: The Divinity is manifest in man more than in any other object," (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna p. 350).

[18] D. G. Mukerji, *op cit.*

"Mother," Premananda heard him pray, "do not let me become famous by leading those who believe in beliefs to me: Do not expound beliefs through my voice."[19]

And he warned his disciples against any kind of Ramakrishnaism.

Above all things there must be no barriers.

"A river has no need of barriers. If it dams itself up it stagnates and becomes foul."

Rather the gates must be flung wide open, the gates of oneself and of other people so that all-conquering Unity might be created. This was to be the real part for his chosen disciples—by their common effort they were to "recreate the Being who was to nourish the men and women of the centuries to be."

Their part was to be an active one, demanding great gifts and the wide tolerance of spirit and heart. Nobody must stint himself, but give himself wholly.

That is why, although all men, without exception, were called into the Divine community, he showed himself very strict in the choice of his disciples; for they were the way, whereon the feet of humanity was to march. He claimed that it was not he, but the Mother, who chose them.[20] But was the Mother any

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[19] Once when he was urged to define God, he replied, "And if I were to give you a definition of God, what would you do with it? Use it as an article of faith in order to found a new religion in my name? I did not come into the world to begin a new cult: Ah! No!"

And on another occasion, "Do not look for a religion: be religion:"

[20] "I did not choose them. The Divine Mother led them to me. She made me examine them. At night I meditate, the veil falls and reveals them to me. You can then see the ego of a man or a woman as through a glass case . . . I satisfy myself concerning the character of my disciples before I initiate them."

What man of intuition can fail to recognise this method of different from the entity we carry in the depths of ourselves? This entity in the case of those, who, like Ramakrishna, have acquired the exceptional power of keeping intact an intense solitary concentration in the midst of a life passed in the midst of an innumerable throng, possesses antennæ, which infallibly seek out the inner man. At the most furtive contact they sound the depths, the capacities and the weaknesses, the virtues and the vices, things obscure even to the person under observation, that which is and that which will be. Ordinary men are apt to call in question the reality of this gift of intuitive vision, which reaches from the present into the future. But it is neither more nor less outside the limits of nature than the vibrations of the rod of the "Diviner" on the surface of the earth revealing the water beneath.

Ramakrishna was a wonderful wand in the hand of the Mother. Extraordinary tales are told of his physical and spiritual hypersensitiveness. Towards the end of his life such was his horror of riches that he could no longer touch gold without being burnt.[21] It is also maintained that the mere touch of an impure person gave him physical pain analagous to the bite of a cobra.[22]

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thought, the use of this inward eye opening under lowered lids in the lonely centre of the spirit on the still warm spoils of the world, captured by the lure of the senses? Only the mode of expression varies and the intensity of the eye.

[21] Vivekananda relates, "Even when he was sleeping, if I touched him with a piece of money, his hand would become bent and his whole body would become as if it were paralysed." (My Master).

[22] In illustration of this legendary trait: One day when in the kindness of his heart he had consented to touch a man, who, though outwardly without reproach was inwardly defiled, and who insisted that Ramakrishna should enroll him among his disciples, Ramakrishna howled with pain. He said to the man sorrow-

At sight he could read the soul of those who approached him, and so, if he accepted them as his disciples, it was with full knowledge.[23] He discovered in a hardly formed adolescent with character scarcely developed the exact task for which he had been born. Sometimes he discovered a great destiny, suspected least of all by the person concerned. Perhaps he helped such destiny to be born by announcing it. This great moulder of souls cast with his fingers of fire the bronze of Vivekananda as well as the delicate and tender wax of Yogananda or Brahmananda. A curious fact is that the most resolute to resist him, were bound sooner or later to yield to the spiritual election he had made. They then brought as much passion into play in submitting to him as they had formerly used in withstanding him. He had the power of divining, seizing and keeping those spirits foreordained for his mission, and it would appear that the hawk eye of the Paramahamsa was never mistaken.

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fully and kindly, "The touch of divine bliss has become in you a cobra's poison. It is not in this life, my son:" and continued under his breath, "Your liberation."

A thousand other instances of this hypersensitiveness might be related. A blow given to a man in the street by a furious enemy left its physical mark on the flesh of Ramakrishna. His nephew saw his back red and inflamed at the sight of a man whose back was scored with the whip. And Girish Chandra Ghosh, whose witness is unimpeachable, has certified to the fact of his stigmata. This spiritual contact with all forms of life made him at one even with animals and plants. It has been said of him, that he felt a brutal step upon the earth as it were upon his own heart.

[23] He did not blindly depend upon his own intuition. He visited the tutors of his young disciples, he learnt all about them and studied them in meditation. With a remarkable and scrupulous attention he noted their physiological characteristics of respiration, sleep and even digestion. He held that they were of considerable importance in confirming his diagnosis of their spiritual faculties and destiny.

IX

THE MASTER AND HIS CHILDREN

It is possible to divide the train of great souls, with which he surrounds himself, into two classes: a third order,[1] as it were of men and women, who remained serving God in the world—and the chosen band of apostles.

Let us first consider the former: for these disciples or listeners belonging to the second (third Order) illustrate the spirit of broad "catholicity" animating Ramakrishna, and to what an extent his religion took into account, for others as well as for himself, the common duties of humanity.

He did not ask men of goodwill to leave all and follow him. On the contrary he was careful to refrain from saying, "Forsake all to seek salvation!" to those already caught by worldly ties, such as married people and fathers of families.

He forbade his disciples to sacrifice the legitimate rights of others "just because you, my son, wish to become a holy man." Personal salvation was mere selfishness in too many cases, and therefore resulted in a worse death of the soul.

". . . We owe a debt to the gods. We owe a debt to parents. We owe a debt to our wives. . . . No work can be satisfactorily concluded until the debt to parents at least has been paid. . . . Harish gave up his wife and lives here. But if his wife had not been provided for, I should have called him a wicked fellow. . . . There are those who are constantly quoting scripture, but their deeds and their words do not tally. Rama Prasana says that Manu ordered that Sadhus should be served. And his old mother was dying of hunger and was obliged to beg for what she needed: . . . That enrages me: Not even a depraved mother ought to be deserted. . . . So long as parents remain in want the practise of devotion avails nothing.[2]

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[1] Third Order: It was the name given by St. Francis of Assisi to a half lay, half religious order to which pious people living in the world could (and can still) belong.

"The brother of S. came here for several days. He had left his wife and his children in the care of his brother-in-law. I rebuked him severely. . . . Was it not criminal to leave his home, when he had so many children to bring up? Was it for strangers to feed them and be troubled with them? It was a scandal: . . . I told him to go and look for work. . . ."

"You should bring up your children, provide for your wife, and put by what is necessary for her to live upon after your death. If you do not do so you are heartless; and a man without compassion is not worthy of the name of man." [3]

"I tell people that they must fulfil their duties in the world as well as think about God. I do not ask them to renounce all (smiling). The other day in the course of a lecture, Keshab said, 'O God, grant that we may be plunged in the river of Devotion and attain the Ocean of Satchidananda (Being, Knowledge, Eternal Felicity):' The women were present sitting behind a screen. I showed them to Keshab and said, 'If you are all plunged in at once, what will be their fate? . . . So you must come out of the water from time to time; immerse yourselves and come out alternately:' Keshab and the others began to laugh. . . ."[4]

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[2] Gospel of Ramakrishna, II, 251 *et seq.* The Ramakrishna Mission has followed the teachings of the Master. It does not admit anyone to the monastic life unless his family voluntarily renounce him. For they hold that a man who flees from worldly responsibility is too weak to be exposed to the heavier responsibility of God's service. (Cf. Mukerji).

[3] Life of Ramakrishna, p. 587.

"Your duty as a married man is to live with your wife as brother and sister as soon as one or two children have been born, and to pray to God that you may be granted the power to live a perfect spiritual life exercising self control."[5]

"Undoubtedly a man, who has once tasted the bliss of God, finds the world insipid. To lead a religious life in the world is to stay in a room with only a feeble ray of light. Those who are used to the open air cannot live in prison.[6] But, if you live in a house, you have these duties to fulfil. As you fulfil them learn always to enjoy the ray of light. Lose none of it. Never lose it. As you work, let one of your hands do the work and with the other touch the feet of the Lord. When your work is suspended, take His feet in both your hands and put His feet on your heart. . . .[7] What would you gain by renouncing the world? Family life is a fortress for you. . . .[8] Also he who attains to knowledge is free everywhere. Only the imbecile who says, 'I am chained' ends by being so. The spirit is everything; if it is free you are free. Whether in society or in the forest I am not bound. I am the Son of God, of the King of Kings. Who, then, can put chains upon me? . . .[9]"

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[4] The Gospel, Vol. II. 266.

The peasant's son knew much more about the necessities of existence than the rich Keshab, and that there is more merit if a poor workman finds a place for one single thought of God during the day, than if he consecrated hours to religious offices like an idle devotee.

"One day (here is one of his pregnant and piquant parables) Narada thought that he was the most pious of men. The Lord told him to go and see a peasant who was more pious than he. He went. The peasant invoked the name of Hari when he got up and when he went to bed; the rest of the day he worked in the fields. Narada did not understand. Then the Lord told him to take a cup filled to the brim with oil and to carry it round the town without spilling a drop. Narada obeyed. When he came back without having spilt a drop, the Lord asked, 'How many times did you think of Me?' 'Lord, how could I think of you? My mind was concentrated on the cup of oil.' Thus the Lord made Narada understand how great was the peasant's devotion, who, in spite of his work, did not forget to call upon His name." (Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings, I. 45.)

[5] Gospel, I. 403.

So he offers to all the means to liberate themselves, to drink from the inner spring, to take part in the joy of the Universal Existence which is in everyone and which is love. And that without contradicting their own nature, without mutilating and without forcing it, and above all without injuring a hair of anyone who depends upon them. . . .[10] Far from forbidding them legitimate affections, it is these very affections which he uses for their illumination. This illumination is the peaceful canal, with beautiful reflections, which leads the Pure and the Simple to God. Here is a charming example:

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[6] Interview with Trailokya Nath Sanyal.

[7] Conversations with Keshab and his Disciples, 1882.

[8] Life of Ramakrishna, page 400.

[9] Conversations with Keshab and his Disciples, 1882.

[10] It is thus highly improbable that he would have approved of our Saint Jeanne de Chantal, and still less of our Marie de l'Incarnation who abandoned her son of eleven years to give herself to God. (See Henri Brémond "Literary History of Religious Sentiment in France," Volume VI.)

The daughter of one of his disciples (Brahmo Manilal Malik) was troubled. She told him with regret that when she prayed she was unable to concentrate. Ramakrishna asked her, "Whom in the world do you love the most?" She answered it was her brother's little child. "Well," said the affectionate master, "fix your mind upon him." She did and she saw behind the little boy the infant Krishna. . . .[11]

How dear to me is this little flower of tenderness. What profound meaning it has. Each of us, even if his heart is filled with night, possesses the divine spark in the most humble impulse of true love. No one is entirely deprived of this little pilot light; it is sufficient to light his way. And all ways are good ways, even the bad ways. Every destiny is good if each person follows his own destiny with loyal sincerity. The rest is in the hands of God. Have confidence and march on.

Therefore live your life and love your loved ones in all innocence and peace; all you have to do is to see God under their dear shapes and give thoughts to Him.

And how deeply and indulgently Ramakrishma's maternal eye penetrated and understood, so that he knew how to guide the troubled souls of the most lost of his children, is shown in a story worthy of the Franciscan legends of his relations with the comedian, Girish Chunder Ghosh.

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[11] Another anecdote of the same sort:

A good grandmother felt herself getting old. She wished to withdraw into a religious life at Brindaban. Ramakrishna dissuaded her from it, telling her that she was too fond of her grand-daughter, and that her meditations would be disturbed by thoughts of her. He added, "All the good which you expect from living at Brindaban will come to you of itself if you cultivate this tender affection for your grand-daughter, thinking that she herself is Sri Radhika (the elder sister of Krishna). Caress her as much as you like; feed her; dress her; spoil her to your heart's content. Only remember that in all these acts you are giving worship to the Gods of Brindaban." (Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings, Volume I, Paragraph 70).

This great actor and dramatist was a Bohemian and a debauchee, a rebel against God, although his genius enabled him on occasions to write beautiful religious works.[12] But he regarded such writings as a game. He did not realise a fact that struck Ramakrishna at the first glance, that he himself was the plaything of God.

He heard people talk of the Paramahamasa, and was curious to see him, as he might have been curious to see a freak in a circus. At their first meeting he was drunk and he insulted him. Ramakrishna in a calm and bantering tone said to him:

"At least you might drink to God; Perhaps He drinks as well. . . ."

The drunkard, his mouth agape, exclaimed,

"How do you know?"

"If He did not drink, how could He have created this topsy-turvy world?"

Girish remained in stupified silence. When he had gone, Ramakrishna said quietly to his astounded disciples.

"That man is a great devotee [13] of God."

At his own invitation he went to see Girish act in his Calcutta theatre.[14] Girish was vain and looked for compliments. But Ramakrishna said to him,

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[12] Some of them have been translated from Bengali into English. He is regarded as one of the greatest Bengali dramatists.

[13] "Devotee" is used here, as elsewhere in this book, as meaning, devoted to God, one who has given himself wholly to God.

[14] Towards the end of 1884. He was present at one of the first performances of Chaitanya-lila and in 1885 he saw performances of four or five other plays of Girish in particular the dramatised life of Buddha.

"My son, you suffer from a crooked soul."

Girish was furious and loaded him with insults. Ramakrishna blessed him and went away. The next day Girish came to beg his pardon, and became a disciple of Ramakrishna. But he could not give up drinking. Ramakrishna never asked him to do so, with the result that eventually Girlish broke the habit; for Ramakrishna had strengthened his resolution by allowing him to feel that he was absolutely free.

But this was not enough. Ramakrishna told him that to refrain from doing evil was too negative a virtue; he must draw near to God. Girish found this impossible, for he had never been able to submit to discipline. In despair he said that he would prefer suicide to meditation and prayer.

"I am not asking you for much," Ramakrishna replied. "Just one prayer before you eat, and one prayer before you go to bed. Can you not do it?"

"No; I hate routine. I cannot pray or meditate. I cannot even think of God for a second."

"Good," replied Ramakrishna. "Well, if you really desire to see the Lord, but if at the same time you will not take a single step towards Him, will you make me your proxy? I will do your praying for you, while you will lead your own life. But take care; you must promise me to live from henceforth absolutely at the Lord's mercy."

Girish accepted his suggestion without fully realising the consequences. His life was no longer under the control of his own will, but at the mercy of inner forces, like a leaf in the wind, or like a kitten whose mother can carry it equally well onto a king's bed as a dustheap.[15] He had to accept this condition without demur, and it was not easy. Girish struggled loyally, but once he was driven to say,

"Yes, I will do it."

"What is that?" Ramakrishna cried sternly. "You have no longer the will to do or not to do. Remember, I am your proxy. Your behaviour is according to the will of the Lord within you. I pray for you; but my prayers will avail nothing unless you abandon all initiative."

Girish submitted, and the result of this discipline was that after a time he attained self-surrender to the impersonal Self; he was conquered by God.

But he did not renounce his profession as dramatist and actor, and Ramakrishna never desired it. Instead he purified it. He had been the first to introduce women onto the Bengal stage, and now he rescued many unfortunate girls from misery and uplifted them. Afterwards he took them to Ramakrishna's monastery. He became one of the most religious followers of the Master, one of the greatest of his householder disciples. Notwithstanding his freedom of speech and caustic humour, he was respected and venerated after the Master's death by the monastic disciples.

As he was dying, he said,

"The folly of matter is a terrible veil. Take it away from my eyes, Ramakrishna!" [16]

And so, his religious sense, a sixth sense more highly developed in him than any of the others, revealed to Ramakrishna those among the passers-by, who were predestined for a divine sowing, those in whom God was sleeping. One glance, one gesture, was enough to awaken it. Nearly all the disciples yielded to him at the first meeting, the vibrations of their inner being whether they wished to do so or not. He scrutinised them through and through. Other men had only their own salvation to find, but the true disciples were to be leaders and have the charge of other souls. That was why, when they were recruited, they were, as I have said, subjected to physical[17] and moral examination, followed after their admission by a paternal and ever watchful discipline.

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[15] "Like a cat," (Marjari) is the classical simile of the Bhakti. The cat saves its kittens by carrying them inert. Certain sects of Southern India conceive thus of salvation. They believe it is accomplished exclusively by God. (Cf. Paul Masson-Oursel: *Sketch of the History of Indian Philosophy,* p. 247.)

[16] I have followed the narrative of D. G. Mukerji in this account.

He preferred them young, sometimes very young, hardly adolescent,[18] and unmarried, "not yet caught in the net of desire, nor entrapped by riches, free from ties. . . ." If, like Brahmananda, they were married, he examined the wife as well, and satisfied himself that she would help and not hinder her young husband in his mission. In general the disciples of this unlettered man were well-educated and knew at least one foreign language in addition to Sanskrit. But this was not an essential; the example of Latu is significant, although it may be said that he was the exception to prove the rule. A humble and ignorant servant, a peasant of Behar and a stranger to Bengal, he was awakened to eternal life by one glance from Ramakrishna, for he possessed unwittingly the same genius of heart as the Master.[19]

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[17] He was very particular about perfect health. The chief disciples, Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Saradananda, Turiyananda, etc., seem to have been of athletic build, tall and broad, and possessing rare physical strength. I repeat that he was always careful to examine the tongue, the chest, the working of the organs, before sanctioning the exercises of intensive meditation.

[18] Turiyananda was fourteen years old, Subodhananda seventeen.

"Many of us," said Swami Turiyananda, "had to go through the muddy waters of knowledge before we attained God, but Latu jumped over them, like Hanuman."

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What did Ramakrishna teach his disciples? Vivekananda has emphasised the originality of his methods, especially in the India of his day; since then some of his educational principles have been adopted and systematised by the new schools of Europe. Up to that time in India the word of the master was law. A Guru exacted from his Chelas (pupils) a deeper respect than that paid to parents. Ramakrishna would have none of it. He put himself on a level with his young disciples. He was their companion, their brother; he talked familiarly with them and without any trace of superiority. The advice he gave them was not his own. It came from the Mother through his lips. "What has it to do with me?" Moreover, words are mere accessories; they are not instruction. True instruction does not consist in inculcating doctrine[20] but in "communicating." But what is to be communicated? A man's self? Not even that, or rather something more than that—the One self. Or we may describe it as the condition of inward abundance, of vital and digested riches called "Spirituality." And this is to be communicated "as a flower might be given," in the same way that a good gardener dispenses the sun and the sheltering shade to the budding souls entrusted to him, so that they may blossom and exhale their spiritual perfume. That is all. The rest comes from within them. "When the lotus is full blown, the bees come and collect the honey. Let the lotus of character expand naturally."

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[19] Few lives of saints are more moving than that of this boy servant of a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who came by boat up the Ganges on behalf of his master to lay an offering at Ramakrishna's feet. Their glances met. Two days later Latu came and gave himself to the Master—a gift for life. He was so completely emptied of self that he feared, even when he was doing good, lest he should be caught again in the trap of self-love or of routine; he was only reassured when he felt himself fused in the goodness of God. This illiterate man understood the profound language of music. When he was dying, "Spitting his body" to use his own rude expression, he cried in ecstacy, "I hear the sound of a flute. At last I am going to His meeting-place."

Still less was there any question of imposing his own ideas upon them. There was to be no established Credo; I have already quoted his words:

"Mother do not expound beliefs through my voice;"

And ritual even less;

"God cannot be won by a system of ritual," but only by love and sincerity.

There were no fruitless discussions on metaphysics and theology;

"I do not like argument. God is above the powers of reason. I see that all which exists is God. Then of what avail to reason? . . . Go into the garden, eat the sacred mangoes and go out again; You do not go in to count the leaves on the mango tree. So why waste time in disputes about reincarnation or idolatry?"[21]

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[20] "Do not trouble yourselves with doctrine; It is the Essence of existence in each man, which counts; and this is spirituality. You must acquire it."

According to Vivekananda the principle of his teaching was, "First form character, first earn spirituality, and results will come of themselves." (My Master.)

What then did matter? Personal experience. Experiment first and then believe in God. Belief ought not to precede but to follow religious experience. If it comes first, it is inconsistent.

Nevertheless Ramakrishna presupposed *his* own belief that God is in everything, that He is everything, and that it therefore follows that whoever opens his eyes and looks around him will of necessity end by meeting Him; This union with God was such a deep and constant[22] reality in his case that he did not feel any need to prove it, and he would never have dreamt of imposing it upon others. He was too certain that every sane and sincere seeker would arrive at it by himself, and through himself alone. His sole care was to make his disciples sane and sincere.

But who can gauge the moral influence of such a being wholly impregnated with God? It is obvious that his tranquil and constant vision was intermingled with his flesh, like the scent of pines in autumn honey, and hence it would percolate over the tongues of his young and starving disciples, who drank in eagerly his gestures and his movements. But he himself had no suspicion of it. He left them free, so he believed. He believed that God was simply spreading His perfume through his substance, like thyme when the wind blows over it. The thyme makes no effort to convince you. All you have to do is to smell its fresh scent;

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[21] Cf. the Gospel *passion.*

[22] It even reached the pitch of hallucination;

"Do you know what I see? I see Him in all things. Man and the other creatures seem to me like miniature figures clothed in flesh; and it is the Lord within them that moves head and feet and hands. Once I had this Vision: One Substance alone had taken all the forms of the Cosmos and all living creatures—a wax house, with garden, men, cows, all of wax—nothing but wax—" (Gospel I. 437.)

"One day it was revealed to me that everything is pure Spirit; —the temple vessels, the altar, men, beasts—all pure Spirit; and like a madman I began to rain flowers over everything. Everything that I saw, I worshipped. . . ."

This then was the essential part of Ramakrishna's discipline. A man must have and keep his body, senses and spirit honest and pure, unspotted, unworn, as young as Adam.

To achieve this the first rule was continence.

This rule, which our anti-Clerics of the West claim with ingenuous ignorance to be a monopoly of the Church of Rome, and against which they are never tired of launching their old and blunted arrows, is as old as the world—(though if the whole world had applied it rigourously it would obviously never have lived to grow old). All great mystics and the majority of great idealists, the giants among the creators of the spirit, have clearly and instinctively realised what formidable power of concentrated soul, of accumulated creative energy, is generated by a renunciation of the organic and psychic expenditure of sexuality. Even such free thinkers in matters of faith, and such sensualists as Beethoven, Balzac and Flaubert, have felt this.

"Let me keep it for a higher purpose;" (for God and creative art), Beethoven cried one day when he had repulsed the appeal of carnal passion. For a still stronger reason the impassioned of God cannot bear any division of themselves; for they know that their God will refuse to visit them in a house cumbered and soiled with desire. (Not only is the *act* called in question but the thought even more so). It is not enough to practise sexual continence if concupiscence is hidden in the secrets of the heart; for this would be impotence—another sin—rather than freedom. The rule is inflexible for Hindu Sannyasin; and the spiritual guides as different as the tender, serene, almost feminine Ramakrishna and the masculine, ardent and passionate Vivekananda, a torch of passion shaken by all winds that blow, allowed no compromise.

"Absolute continence must be practised, if God is to be realised. If a man remains absolutely continent for twelve years, he achieves superhuman power. A new nerve develops in him, called 'the nerve of intelligence.' He can remember everything and know everything. Renunciation of Kamini-Kanchana (woman and gold) is essential." [23]

Poverty, chastity, the mystic marriage of St. Francis. The prescriptions of Churches and Sacred Books are superfluous; for kindred spirits of the East and the West have arrived at the same conclusions and the same results. Generally speaking the man who dedicates himself to the inner life (whether it be called Christ, Shiva, or Krishna, or the pure idea of thought and art) "must have absolute empire over his senses." [24]

But that is not enough. Those (and they are in the majority) who have to remain in contact with the world and to work in it, must exercise the same "empire" over the object of their work and the intellectual passions that feed it. They must take care not to become the slaves of any activity, however noble, to which they may be devoted.[25]

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[23] Gospel of Ramakrishna, II. 223 *et seq.*, I. 252 *et seq.* The question is there treated by the Master in frank and open terms without any false modesty.

[24] Gospel of Ramakrishna, II. 223.

"You cannot escape work, because nature (Prakriti) drives you to it. That being so, let all work be done as it should be done! Then if it is done without attachment it leads to God, and is a means to attain the end—and the end is God."

"Without attachment" does not imply without conscience, or zeal of love of good work, but only with disinterestedness.

"To work without attachment is to work without the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, either in this world or in any other. . . ."

But Ramakrishna was too human not to know that such an ideal is very rarely attained by frail humanity:

"To work without attachment is extremely difficult, especially in our days, and can only be realised by a chosen few. . . ."

But it is a common duty to aspire at least to such detachment and fervent prayer and true charity are aids to it.

But stop; the word charity is an equivocal one. Charity and philanthropy are usually classed as synonyms. Ramakrishna evinced a curious mistrust of the latter, unsurpassed by any of our Western satirists such as Dickens or Mirabeau, and he unmasked with laugh or insult the hypocrisy of certain "philanthropists," although he ran the risk of shocking many good people. More than once Ramakrishna told his faithful followers to be on their guard against ostentatious philanthropy. His intuition of the secret workings of the heart led him to discover only too often in the activities and professions of charitable faith nothing but egoism, vanity, a desire for glory, or merely a barren agitation, which, without real love behind it, seeks to kill the boredom of life; when it throws its mite to misery it is in reality trying to rid itself of its own haunting troubled vision rather than to help the unfortunate. To the good Mallik, who spoke to him about founding hospitals and relief works, he said,

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[25] High disinterestedness with regard to their work has been shown by some of the most beautiful artists and proudest Christian savants of the West—even in the sceptical XVIIIth century. I have admired it in men as proud as Gluck and Handel, as sensually human as Hasse and Mozart; each showed complete indifference to the fate of their work after their death, leaving it like Racine to die, in the full flood of creative power. I venture to say that no man has been able to achieve greatness unless he has attained to this height.

"Yes, but only on condition that you remain 'detached' (That is to say entirely disinterested) in doing good."

He was almost carried away when he talked with worldly men, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the novelist, or with the manager of a newspaper (the Hindu Patriot), of so little account did he hold the intentions, the depth of soul and above all the acts of those, whose mouth is full of good works—roads and works of public utility, etc. He denied that a single real or durable good could emerge from corrupt souls. First then men must purge themselves of their egoism, and not till that has been accomplished can they work usefully for the world.

In order to elucidate Ramakrishna's attitude in this connection, I have asked many questions of the most authoritative of his still living disciples, those who represent his doctrine—Swami Shivananda and Swami Ashokananda, and they have been at great pains to answer me. But in spite of some isolated instances, quoted above, attesting to the active philanthropy of

Ramakrishna, they have not been able to prove that well-doing by works occupied any essential place in his teaching. This would be a grave charge (I say it in all loyalty), from the Western point of view which puts deeds before intentions, and the good of others before individual salvation, if we did not remember, first, that Ramakrishna repudiated the egoism of individual salvation just as much as philanthropy without disinterested love, and, next, that his object was to light the lamp of charity in every heart.

What then is the difference between charity and self-love?[26] Charity is the love emanating from us, not limited in its application to self, family, sect, and country. Self-love is attachment to self, family, sect, and country. Therefore a charity, which raises and leads men to God,[27] is to be cultivated.

For Ramakrishna charity meant nothing less than the love of God in all men; for God is incarnate in man.[28] Nobody can truly love man, and hence nobody can help him unless he loves the God in him. And the corollary also holds good: nobody can really know God unless he has seen Him in every man.[29]

This is what the Abbot of the Order, Shivananda, the man whose task is to represent the true spirit of Ramakrishna in these days, wrote to me[30]—lines whose spiritual sense will be familiar to the readers of Pascal:

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[26] "Self-Love," it goes without saying, is used in its classical meaning of "Love of self."

[27] Gospel of Ramakrishna, I, 261.

[28] "You are seeking God? Very well, look for Him in man; The Divinity manifests itself in man more than in any other object. In truth God is in everything; but his power is more or less manifest in other objects. God incarnate in man is the most manifest power of God in the flesh. . . . Man is the greatest manifestation of God." (Gospel I. 350.)

[29] "The attainment of perfect knowledge is to see God in every man." (ibid., Vol. II.)

"You appear to conceive some distinction between the realisation of the Divinity in man and the consciousness of universal suffering with regard to motives for service. It seems to me that these are merely two aspects of the same state of mind and not two different ones. It is only by realising the Divinity inherent in man that we can truly grasp the depths of his misery; for not till then will his condition of spiritual servitude, and his lack of perfection and divine happiness appeal to our conscience as almost tangible evidence. It is the sad feeling of contrast between the Divinity in man and his present ignorant state with all the suffering it entails that pricks the heart to serve mankind. Without the realisation of this Divine Spirit in himself and in others true sympathy, true love, true service are impossible. That is why Sri Ramakrishna wished his disciples to attain Self-realisation. Otherwise they could not consecrate themselves profitably to the service of humanity." [31]

But meanwhile humanity is suffering, humanity is dying, abandoned. Is it to be left without help? Certainly not. For that which Ramakrishna never ac-

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[30] December 7, 1927.

[31] And again Swami Ashokananda wrote: "Service originates from love and sympathy in the ordinary plane. But . . . when we learn to look upon suffering humanity as only God in different forms, we find that the consciousness of the Divine in men is the motive of service, and such service becomes a potent means of God-realisation." (Prabuddha Bharata, February, 1928.) Dare I say that it seems to me still more beautiful, still purer and higher to love and to serve the "suffering" *without any thought of the "Divine"* simply because it is suffering, and that forgetfulness of the Divine is perhaps nearer to the Divine than perpetual preoccupation with it, since it does not allow of the maintenance of any trace of *"attachment"*—in the sense implied by Ramakrishna?

complished, which in fact he never could have accomplished within the bounds of his Karma and the limited horizon of his life (a life even then drawing to its close), he left to his greatest disciple, the heir of his word, Vivekananda—to the man, whom indeed it was his particular mission to summon from the ranks of mankind to come to mankind's rescue. To him, almost in spite of himself, he entrusted the task of working in the world and of "alleviating the misery of the humble and the poor." [32]

And Vivekananda brought a devouring passion and energy of action to it; for his was a nature cast in a very different mould from his master's, one unable to wait a single day, a single hour before coming to the help of misery. He suffered it in his own flesh. It haunted him. It wrung from him cries of despair. He did not possess the strange serenity wherein, during his last years, the spirit of Ramakrishna floated—that disembodied spirit that had penetrated into the redoubtable sphere of a Beyond where good and evil were not: The Absolute is without attachment to the good as well as to the evil. It is like the light of a lamp. You can with its help read the Holy Scriptures, but you can equally well commit forgery by the same light. . . . Whatever the sin, the evil or the misery we find in the world, they are only misery, evil or sin in relation to us. The Absolute is above and beyond. Its sun lights the evil as well as the good.[33] I am afraid that you must accept the facts of the universe as they are. It is not given to man to penetrate clearly the ways of the Lord.[34] I see and I realise that all three are of the same substance—the victim of the sacrifice, the block and the executioner. . . . Ah, what a vision.[35]

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[32] The beautiful episode of 1886 will appear later, as it was told to me by Swami Shivananda, an eye-witness.

[33] Gospel, I, 6. 87.

Yes, the vision has a tragic grandeur akin to the ocean. And it is good that all visible souls should plunge into it and renew their strength from time to time. It was well that at the bottom of his tender heart Ramakrishna kept its sovereign roaring and salt tang. But it is not for ordinary mortals. They run the risk of being maddened or petrified by terror. Their weakness is not fitted to achieve the synthesis of the Absolute and the Ego. In order that their vital spark may not be extinguished, "the wand of the ego imposed upon the ocean of Satchidananda (Being, Knowledge, Happiness) must be preserved." It may be no more than "a line traced upon the water," but "if you take it away, nothing remains but the one undivided Ocean." [36] So keep it as a protection against vertigo. God himself has allowed this semblance to support the stumbling steps of His children. They are none the less His. To those who asked Ramakrishna anxiously, "Lord, you speak to us of those who realise the Unity: 'I am He' . . . But what of those who cannot do so, those who say: 'Thou art not me. I seek Thee.' What becomes of them?" He replied with a reassuring smile, "There is no difference: whether you call Him 'Thou' or call Him 'I am He.' Men that realise Him through 'Thou' have a very lovely relation with Him. It is very much like that of an old trusted servant with his Master. As they both grow old, the Master leans and depends on his friend the servant, more and more. . . . The Master consults his servant regarding every serious matter that he wishes to undertake. One day . . . the Master takes him by the hand, then seats him on his own august seat. The servant is embarrassed and . . . says, 'What are you doing, my Lord?' But the Master holds him on the throne next to Himself saying, 'You are the same as I, my Beloved.' "[37]

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[34] Ibid., I, 101.
[35] Ibid., I, 437.
[36] Ibid., II.

Ramakrishna could always adapt his thought to the range of vision of each individual disciple; and far from destroying the fragile equilibrium of the human spirit, he was careful to establish it by delicately graduating the proportion of the elements constituting it. He could be seen changing his method according to each temperament to such an extent that he sometimes seemed to hold contradictory views. He counselled energy to the angelic Yogananda, whose excessive good nature led him into error.

"A devotee ought not to be a fool."

He scolded him severely for not knowing how to defend himself. But he vehemently enjoined the violent Niranjanananda, ever ready to march against an enemy or to attack anyone who had insulted him, to cultivate a mild and forgiving spirit in face of injury. In the disciples "of the heroic type," he tolerated certain weaknesses, which he denied to the weaker ones, because the former could not be permanently affected by them. With unerring tact he knew how to calculate the force of reaction in each being.

It might have been expected that a man who lived in constant contact with the Absolute beyond the norm controlling the course of ordinary life, would have been incapable of understanding and guiding the thousand nuances of daily action. But the contrary was true in the case of Ramakrishna. His freedom from the chains of Illusion removed in the first instance the blinkers of all his prejudices, fanaticism and narrowness of heart and mind. And as there was no longer an impediment to his free and frank regard, he judged all things and all men with laughing good sense. One of his Socratic discussions would have surprised a hearer of to-day. They are often nearer to Montaigne and Erasmus than to the Galilean. Their ironic turn, their gay humour have a refreshing effect. The ardent atmosphere of Bengal must have doubled their appeal to young brains, always ready to be carried away. I will here give two piquant examples of them; the parables of the Elephant and the Serpent. In the former Ramakrishna with diverting irony warned his disciples against the two opposite extremes of violence and absolute non-resistance. In the latter he seems to be treating himself ironically; he had perceived the dangers of amoralism and of indifference to action, which tend to give young heads the sunstroke of the omnipresent God, and he banteringly gauged the degree of His presence in us and our surroundings, and the hierarchy of his forms and laws.

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[37] Cf. Mukerji, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

The Elephant

"Once upon a time there lived in a certain forest a holy man, who had a great number of disciples. One day he taught them as follows: 'God,' he said, 'is in everything. Therefore we ought to bow our heads in adoration before every single object in the world.'

It happened that one of his disciples had gone to collect wood for the sacrificial fire. Suddenly he heard a shout: 'Scatter; Scatter: A mad elephant is coming;' Immediately they all fled, except one, who reasoned thus: 'The elephant is God in one form; why then should I run away?' So he stayed where he was, he bowed to the elephant as the Lord, and began to sing his praises. The elephant-driver yelled: 'Save yourself! Save yourself! . . .' But the disciple would not move a single step. The elephant seized him in its trunk and flung him a great distance. The unfortunate man remained motionless, stunned, bruised and bleeding. When his Master heard what had happened he ran to his assistance with the others. They carried him into the house and cared for his wounds. When he recovered consciousness they asked him: 'Why did you not save yourself when you heard the elephant-driver shout?' The young man replied, 'Our Master had just taught us that God reveals Himself in every living creature. I thought of the elephant as God, and so I did not want to leave the place.' Then the Guru said to him, 'My son, it was true that it was an elephant God, who appeared; But did not the elephant-driver God tell you to seek shelter? It is quite true that God reveals Himself in all things, but if He is manifest in the elephant, is He not just as much manifest in the elephant-driver—if not more? Tell me then why you paid no attention to his warning. . . .' "[38]

And here is the substance of a mischievous conversation of the Master with the youthful Vivekananda:

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[38] Gospel, I, 56.

The Serpent

The Master (smiling)—"What think you, Narendra?[39] People who live in the world often express themselves very bitterly with regard to those who live in God. When an elephant goes his way along the highroad, a crowd of curs and other animals always run after him, yapping and snapping at his heels. But he takes no notice and proceeds along his own undeviating way. Suppose, my child, people speak evil of you behind your back, what would you do?"

Narenda (scornfully)—"I should regard them as the curs in the street barking at my heels."

The Master (laughing)—"No, my child, you must never go as far as that; Remember that God dwells in all things animate and inanimate. So all things deserve our respect. . . . The only thing that we can do in our intercourse with men, is to take care that we consort with the good and avoid the society of the wicked. It is true that God is even in the tiger. But it does not follow that we ought to put our arms round his neck and press him to our heart;" (The disciples laughed).

Narenda—"Must one then remain quiet, if rogues insult one?"

The Master—"Once upon a time there was a field wherein herd boys watched over their cattle. In the same field lived a terrible and poisonous serpent. One day a holy man happened to pass by. The children ran to him and cried: 'Holy man, do not go that way. Beware of the serpent;' 'My children,' said the holy man, 'I am not afraid of your serpent. I know the Mantras which will keep me safe from all harm.' So saying, he continued his way. . . .The serpent saw him and came towards him raising his hood. The holy man murmured a charm, and the serpent fell at his feet as powerless as an earthworm. 'Well,' said the holy man, 'Why do you behave thus, doing evil to others? I am going to give you a Sacred name (that of God) to repeat, and you will learn to love God; in the end you will see Him; and the desire to do evil will leave you.' He whispered the Sacred Name in the serpent's ear. The serpent bowed and said, 'O Master, what must I do to be saved?' 'Repeat the Sacred Name,' said the holy man, 'and do no ill to any living creature; I shall come again to see how you have been behaving.' And so saying, the holy man departed. . . . Days went by. The little herd boys noticed that the serpent did not bite. They threw stones at it. It remained as quiet and inoffensive as an earthworm. One of the little wretches took it by the tail, waved it round his head and then threw it against the stones several times. The serpent vomited blood and was left for dead. During the night he came to himself; slowly, slowly he dragged himself to his hole; his body was broken in pieces. After several days he was nothing but a skeleton, it took him so much time before he could drag himself out to look for food. For fear of the children he only went out at night. From the time of his initiation by the Brahmin he had stopped doing evil to any creature. As well as he could he tried to live on leaves and other wisps. The holy man returned. He looked everywhere in order to find the serpent. The children told him that he was dead. The Brahmin was astonished; he knew that the name of the

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[39] I would remind the reader that Narendra or Naren was the real name of Vivekananda.

Lord, which the serpent repeated, had the spiritual power to make death impossible before the problem of life had been solved, that is to say, before God had been seen. He recommenced his search, and called the serpent several times by name. The serpent came out of his hole, and bowed to his teacher. The following dialogue took place:

The holy man: Well, how are you?

The serpent: Thank you, Master. By the grace of God I am very well.

The holy man: How is it, then, that you are nothing but skin and bone? What has happened to you?

The serpent: O Master, in obedience to your command I tried not to harm any living creature. I have been living on leaves and other scraps. And so it is possible that I have grown thinner.

The holy man: I fear that it is not simply a change of diet that has brought you to this state. There must have been something else. Tell me;

The serpent: Ah; . . . perhaps . . . yes . . . I can see what it was without a doubt. One day the little herd boys treated me rather badly. They took me by the tail, and banged me against the stones several times very hard. Poor children! They had no idea of the change that had taken place in me. How were they to know that I would not bite anyone?

The holy man: But what madness! what madness! you must be an idiot not to know to stop your enemies from ill-treating you thus. . . . What I forbade you to do was to bite any of God's creatures. But why did you not *hiss* at those who wanted to kill you, so as to frighten them? . . ."

And Ramakrishna looked at his disciples with a twinkle in his eye:

"So raise your hood. . . . But do not bite; . . . A man living in society, particularly if he is a citizen and the father of a family, ought to *pretend* to resist evil in order to defend himself. But he must at the same time be very careful not to return evil for evil."

I will not vouch for the practical and moral excellence of this last receipt, which savours rather of "Si vis pacem, para bellum;" a fallacy this generation has been obliged to expose, to its cost. But I will preserve the mocking smile of this spiritual story-teller, so reminiscent of La Fontaine. We must necessarily also consider Ramakrishna's method as at bottom a means to re-establish equilibrium in the ship of action, swinging perilously and driven by opposing winds from one bank to another, by interposing a common sense view between the two extremes.

It is obvious that he practised and professed "Ahimsa" (hurt nothing) quite as much as Gandhi. He specifically proclaimed it, not only with regard to man but all living creatures.[40]

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[40] Here is another sheaf of beautiful stories:

First this admirable parable: "God in Everything." (Gospel II, p. 129.)

"Once upon a time there was a monastery, whose inmates went out every day to beg. One day a monk, having issued forth to seek food, found a Zemindar (rural proprietor) beating a poor man very severely. . . . He interfered. . . . The Zemindar in a furious rage turned his anger against the monk and beat him until he lost consciousness. The other monks, warned of what had happened, came running up; they found him lying on the ground, carried him gently to the Math (Monastery) and laid him upon his bed. Sitting round him sadly they fanned him, and one gently poured a little milk into his mouth. After a time he came to himself, opened his eyes and looked around him. One of them, anxious to know if he recognised his brethren, cried in his ear, 'Brother, who poured the milk into your mouth?' The monk replied in a faint voice, 'Brother, He who beat me, He Himself poured the milk into my mouth. . . .'"

But he was more of a humorist and more versatile than Gandhi, never anxious to lay down one definite rule, but weighing in one glance the pros and cons of a question. The result was that this passionate lover of the Absolute possessed in the world of Maya a very fine sense of the golden mean, and although, like the Mother, he flung up kite souls into the vault of heaven, he always brought them back to earth by the string of common sense if the hour had not yet come for them to fly away.

He made them remain in the world so that they might teach it; but first they had to be taught them-

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And this anecdote: (Life of Ramakrishna, p. 620.)

"Young Kali used to go fishing. The Master asked him, 'Why are you so cruel?' Kali replied, 'I am not doing anything wrong. We are all Atman and Atman is immortal, so I do not really kill the fishes.' The Master said to him, 'My dear child, you deceive yourself. A man of realisation (that is to say, one who realises the Divinity in himself) can never be cruel to others. It is a physical impossibility. He could not even think of it. . . .'"

(Cf. Life of Ramakrishna, p. 417: Gospel, II, 204. Ramakrishna himself reached such a point that he was unwilling to pick the flowers for the offerings of worship.)

Finally, this moving scene was enacted, as has been recorded by Swami Saradananda:

"One day (in 1884) Ramakrishna was talking to his disciples. He was explaining to them the essential principles of the Vaishnavite religion, of which one is 'Kindness to all creatures.' 'This Universe belongs to Krishna. Know this in the depth of your being, and be kind to all creatures. Kind to all creatures,' he repeated and passed into Samadhi (ecstasy). Coming to himself, he murmured, 'Kind to all creatures . . . Kind? . . . Are you not ashamed, insignificant insect? How can you show pity to God's creatures? Who are you to show mercy? . . . No, No. Mercy is impossible. Serve them as if they were Shiva; . . .'

"Thereupon Naren (Vivekananda), as he went out with the others, expounded to them the deep meaning of these words, which they had only half understood. He interpreted them in the light of the doctrine of Service, which reconciled the high love of God with beneficent activity."

selves—they had to gain an exact knowledge of their own nature, and the natures of others round them and the Divine Essence permeating them all; most of them only attained it by labourious, gradual and constant progress; for this knowledge had to be won by their own efforts, although doubtless they could call upon the paternal help of the Guru; but the will of the Guru was never substituted for their own; he was only there to help them to find their bearings. With a few exceptions he refused to interfere[41] in order to modify

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[41] In general, but not always, he refused to do so. (Further on you will read of his conquest of Vivekananda; but then, the possession of that royal prey was vital; moreover, Vivekananda was of a stature to defend himself, as will be seen.) But even when Ramakrishna wished to leave his disciples their freedom, was he always able to do so? He possessed curious and formidable powers of Yoga. He used them as little as possible, for he detested occult methods, and was absolutely opposed to "miracles"; he did not think that they were impossible, but that they were useless and even harmful. He showed the same repugnance to them as Christ; so called supernatural powers seemed to him a hindrance in the path of spiritual perfection, which ought to be the natural fruit of the heart. But was he always sufficiently master of such powers not to use them? Tulasi (Nirmalananda) had not yet met him and was waiting on a verandah; he saw a man pass by absorbed, with uncertain gait. This man (it was Ramakrishna) gave him one glance without stopping. Tulasi felt a sort of creeping sensation in his bosom and remained paralysed for a moment. Tarak (Shivananda) was facing Ramakrishna, motionless and silent; the Master's look fell upon him; Tarak dissolved in tears and trembled throughout his members. At his first visit Kaliprasad (Abhedananda) touched Ramakrishna, and was immediately flooded with a wave of energy.

At other times the Master seemed deliberately to provoke the awakening of inner forces. He would help the disciples when he saw the efforts they were making of their own free wills. So when he saw Latu (Adbhutananda) exhausting himself by great devotion, he prayed the Mother to grant him the fruit of his pious desire; and several days afterwards, Latu passed into ecstasy during his meditation. When Subodh (Subodhananda) visited him for the second time, he touched his breast, saying, "Awake, Mother, their will during the first stages, when they were the builders of their own development. He merely nourished them with his inner sun, and so increased their energy tenfold. In general it was during the last stage of their upward ascent, when they had manfully attained the bliss of the stage at the top of the slope by their own independent efforts. Then the Master often agreed to bestow the final shock of illumination. A little thing was sufficient, a word, a look, a touch,

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Awake!" and wrote with his finger on his tongue; Subodh felt a torrent of light rising from his inner self to his brain; the forms of Gods and Goddesses passed like lightning and faded into the infinite; he lost all sense of personal identity, but was recalled almost at once by Ramakrishna, who was himself surprised at the violence of his reaction. Little Gangadhar (Akhandananda) was led into the temple of Kali by the Master, who said to him, "Behold, the living Shiva"; and Gangadhar saw Him.

But the reader must beware lest he labour under a misapprehension. The Master never tried to impose on the disciples visions or thoughts which were not already there; he sought rather to awaken them. To intellectual natures he was the first to advise against research for visual realisations. When Baburam (Premananda), whom he loved, begged him to procure ecstasy for him, the Divine Mother warned Ramakrishna that Baburam was destined to have Jnana (knowledge) and not Bhava (emotional absorption in God). He asked the man, who was to be one of his greatest intellectual disciples, (Saratchandra-Saradananda), "How would you like to realise God? What visions do you have when you meditate?" Saratchandra replied, "I do not care for visions. I do not imagine any particular form of God when I meditate. I imagine Him manifested in all creatures upon earth." Ramakrishna smiled and said, "But that is the last word in spirituality. You cannot attain to it at first." Saratchandra replied, "I cannot be content with less."

Even in the case of the most sensitive, visual realisation was only a stage through which they had to pass. Abhedananda, after having seen Gods and Goddesses in meditation, one day saw all the forms blending into one luminous image. Ramakrishna told him that for the future he would have no more visions; he had passed that stage. And in fact from that day Abhedananda had nothing but ideas of the infinite and of immensity, finally reaching the impersonal Brahman. When Sri Ramakrishna heard another per-like the lightning of Grace, which never fell except into prepared souls on heights already attained. No new knowledge was revealed,[42] but everything that

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suading Baburam to obtain special powers from the Master, Ramakrishna called Baburam to his side and said reproachfully, "What more can you ask me for? Is not all that I have yours? All that I have won in the way of realisation is for you. Here is the key, open and take everything."

But he added to the Vedantist, Harinath (Turiyananda), "If you think you can find God better away from me, then go! My one desire is that you should raise yourselves above the misery of the world and enjoy divine beatitude."

And so in a thousand ways he used all his influence to direct these young souls in their true religious sense, so that they might develop their own true and highest individuality. He never dreamt of annexing them. He gave himself to them. He never said to them, and never thought, "You ought to give yourselves to me." Herein lies one of the main differences between his guidance and that of Christ.

(For the above cf. *Life of Ramakrishna,* pp. 475, 488, 600, 604, 606, 615, etc.)

I have thought it necessary to emphasise for the Western reader this curious aspect of personal action exercised by Ramakrishna over those round him, without giving it the importance it obtains in the East. I hold the same opinion as Saratchandra (Saradananda) in this connection. "We must have more. We cannot be satisfied with less." That which the eyes could see counted for little compared to the evidence manifested to the spirit.

[42] Disciples who have passed through these experiences—and several of the most intellectual are still alive—attest that there was not the slightest suggestion of hypnotic power, which violates the will by imposing conditions upon it from an alien consciousness. It was rather of the nature of a tonic, a stimulant. Under its impulsion men obtained a clearer vision of their own ideals. The present Abbot of the order, Swami Shivananda, wrote to me:

"Ramakrishna had the power to raise others to the greatest heights of consciousness by transmitting to them the energy of his own spirituality. He did it either by the power of his thought or by his touch. Many of us had the privilege of being taken to higher planes of spiritual consciousness according to our capacity. It was neither hypnotism, nor a condition of deep sleep. I myself they had known before, all the store of knowledge that they had slowly amassed, became in a flash tangible life and living reality. "At that point you realise that all things live, like your own self, in God. You become the will-power and the conscience of all that is. Your will becomes that of the whole universe. . . ."[43]

This realisation was the last stage, for beyond this temporary revelation lay the supreme realisation, the absolute Identity, obtained in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi (the Highest Ecstasy). But that was reversed for men, who had achieved their mission in life; it was the ultimate and forbidden joy; for from it there is no return except in a few exceptional cases like that of Ramakrishna himself. In spite of the prayers of his disciples, he was loth to let them taste of it; they had not yet won the right. He knew only too well that such "Salt dolls"[44] would no sooner touch the first waves of that Ocean than they would be absorbed in it. He who is desirous of attaining Identity with Unique Reality only receives a return ticket by a miracle.

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had the privilege of attaining this high spiritual consciousness three times through his touch and by his will. I still live to bear direct witness to his tremendous spiritual power."

Let the learned men of Europe who are preoccupied by the problems of mystic psycho-analysis, put themselves in touch with these living witnesses while there is yet time; I myself, I repeat, have little curiosity about such phenomena, whose subjective reality is not in doubt, and I believe it my duty to describe them; for they are hedged about by all possible guarantees of good faith and analytical intelligence. I am more interested in the fact of great religious intuition, in that which *continues to be* rather than in that which *has been,* in that which is or which can be always in all beings rather in that which is the privilege of a few.

[43] It is to be understood that this means that we espouse the will of the universe, and not that we impose our will upon it.

[44] Cf. the parable already quoted, Note I, p. 34.

The disciples therefore had to remain in this world at the stage before the final, wherein identification with all reality takes place.[45] Properly speaking it is stage of illumination, to which we can all aspire and to which we have the power to attain by ourselves and to guide others to a similar attainyment.

And what do we, the free spirits of the West, who have realised the unity of living beings through reason or love, do that is different from this? Is it not the constant aim of our own efforts, the passion inspiring us, the profound faith whereby we live and are carried over the bloody waters of hatred between men without soiling so much as the soles of our feet? Is it not the one object of our desire and our profound conviction that sooner or later it will come to pass—the unity of all nations, races and religions? And are we not in this, although ignorant of it, the disciples of Ramakrishna?

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[45] "The world is the field of action where man is put to work—just as men come from their country houses to business in Calcutta." (Gospel, II, 147.)

X

NAREN, THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

But among the Indian disciples of the Upper Room, all of whom, as I shall show, later distinguished themselves by faith and works, there was one exceptional disciple, whom Ramakrishna treated in an exceptional way. He had chosen him at the very first glance before the young man so much as knew him, on account of what he was and what he might become—a spiritual leader of humanity—Narendranath Dutt, Vivekananda.

The Paramahamsa with his intuitive genius for souls, for whom time was not, and who could discern in the twinkling of an eye the whole flood of the future, believed that he had seen the great disciple in the womb of the elect before he met him in the flesh.

I will give here an account of his beautiful vision. Doubtless I could try to explain it by ordinary methods as well as any of our psychologists, but such explanation is immaterial. We know that a mighty vision creates and produces that which it has seen. In a deeper sense the prophets of the hereafter have been the real creators of what was not yet, but which was trembling on the verge of being. The torrent forming the remarkable destiny of Vivekananda would have been lost in the bowels of the earth, if Ramakrishna's glance had not, as with one blow of an axe, split the rock barring its way, so that through the breach thus made the river of his soul could flow.

"One day I found that my mind was soaring high in Samadhi along a luminous path. It soon transcended the stellar universe and entered the subtler region of ideas. As it ascended higher and higher, I found on both sides of the way ideal forms of gods and goddesses. The mind then reached the outer limits of that region, where a luminous barrier separated the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. Crossing that barrier, the mind entered the transcendental realm, where no corporeal being was visible. Even the gods dared not peep into that sublime realm, and were content to keep their seats far below. But the next moment I saw seven venerable sages seated there in Samadhi. It occurred to me that these sages must have surpassed not only men but even the gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. Lost in admiration, I was reflecting on their greatness, when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine child. The child came to one of the sages, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely arms, and addressing him in a sweet voice, tried to drag his mind down from the state of Samadhi. That magic touch roused the sage from the superconscious state, and he fixed his half-open eyes upon the wonderful child. His beaming countenance showed that the child must have been the treasure of his heart. In great joy the strange child spoke to him, 'I am going down. You too must go with me.' The sage remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent. As he kept gazing at the child, he was again immersed in Samadhi. I was surprised to find that a fragment of his body and mind was descending to earth in the form of a bright light.

No sooner had I seen Narendra than I recognised him to be that sage."[1]

The seer does not say who was the child, but we can guess. Indeed he himself avowed to the disciples[2] that it was he. Certainly he remained throughout his life the Bambino,[3] whose lips drank the milk of the Mother, and who only left Our Lady's arms for an instant, in order to fulfil his destiny—the destiny, according to his own definition, of sending into the world a man better fitted than himself to guide mankind and to take over the command of the army.

His judgment was a sound one. He needed a strong body, arms to turn over the earth, legs to journey over it, a bodyguard of workers and the head to command them, in addition to his great heart charged with love for the whole world. That his burning faith made realisation spring from the soil not only proves his foresight and the strength of his desire, but that the soil of Bengal was prepared and feverishly awaiting his call. Vivekananda was projected into the "century" by the childbirth of Nature herself; for the time of parturition had arrived for that form of spirit.

Ramakrishna is also to be commended for seeing at once in this wayward, tormented and storm-tossed adolescent, as Narendra then was, the future leader, exactly the Evangelist he was expecting.

The story of their early meetings deserves to be told in its entirety. The reader will then feel the same attraction that Naren in spite of himself experienced, and which, in spite of himself, united him to the Master who had chosen him.

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[1] Life of Ramakrishna, p. 438.

[2] Saradananda.

[3] "Bambino" is the name given in the pictures of the Italian Renaissance to the infant Christ in the arms of the Madonna.

But let us first draw the portrait of this young genius at the moment when his meteor entered and was absorbed in the orbit of Ramakrishna.[4]

He was a member of a great aristocratic Kshatriya family, and his whole life showed the stamp of that warrior caste. He was born on January 12, 1863 at Calcutta. His mother was a highly educated woman of regal majesty, whose heroic spirit had been nurtured on the great Hindu epics.[5] His father, who

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[4] In this account I am following the great biography, *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western disciples, Advaita Ashrama, Himalayas, 4 Vols.

To it I have added some precious details furnished by Saradananda in his biography of Ramakrishna, and by the noble American disciple of Vivekananda, Sister Christine, whose unpublished Memoirs were kindly lent to me.

[5] The influence of this woman over her son, Vivekananda, must never be forgotten. He was a difficult child to bring up and gave her much trouble, but until the day of his death he kept a tender regard for her. In America at the end of 1894 he rendered her public homage; in his lectures in praise of Indian womanhood he often spoke of her, extolling her self-mastery, her piety, her high character. "It is my Mother," he said, "who has been the constant inspiration of my life and work."

From Sister Christine's unpublished Memoirs, we learn some characteristic details of his two parents, which she gleaned in the course of private conversations with Vivekananda in America.

From his mother, his proud little mother, he inherited his royal bearing and many of his intellectual faculties, his extraordinary memory, and moral purity.

To his father he owed his intelligence, his artistic sense, his compassion. This noble Indian, who belonged to the generation flooded by the tide of Western positivism, had lost his faith. He treated it as if it were all superstition. He admired the poetry of Hafiz and the Bible as works of art. He said a curious thing to his son, when he showed him the two Christian Testaments. "If there is a religion, it would be in this book." But he did not believe in the soul or in a future life. He was generous to the point of prodigality, and seemed to be given over to a smiling and worldly scepticism. But in reality he suffered deeply from life; and when he heard of the youthful follies of his son, he said, "This world is so terrible, let him forget it if he can";

led an ostentatious and restless life, showed an independence of spirit almost Voltairean in quality, like that of a great French seigneur of the XVIIIth century, and an indifference to caste, due at once to his large sentiment of humanity and to the smiling consciousness of his own superiority. But the grandfather, a rich and cultured man, had abandoned wife and children, a high position, fortune and society at the age of twenty-five to retire into "the forest" and become a Sannyasin; and from that day had never been seen; . . .

His childhood and boyhood were those of a young artist Prince of the Renaissance.[6] He was gifted with a multiplicity of talents, and cultivated them all. He had a leonine beauty coupled to the lithe grace of a fawn. The possessor of physical courage and the build of an athlete, he was a past master in all physical exercises. He could box, swim, row and had a passion for horses. He was the favourite of youth and the arbiter of .fashion. He danced the great religious dances with consummate art, and had a delightful voice, which later was to charm the ear of Ramakrishna. He studied vocal and instrumental music for four or five years under famous Hindu and Musulman professors. He wrote tunes and published a documented Essay on the science and philosophy of Indian music. Indeed he was everywhere regarded as a musical authority. For him music was always the gate of the temple,[7] the vestibule of the palace of the Most High. At college he was distinguished for his brilliant intellect, embracing with equal zest the sciences, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, and Indian and Western languages. He read the English and Sanskrit poets. He devoured the historical works of Green and Gibbon. He was fired by the French Revolution and Napoleon. From his childhood up he practised, like so many Indian children, the habit of meditation. At night he used to pore over the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* and the Vedanta. He loved philosophic discussions. It was this mania for argument, criticism, "discrimination," that later won for him the name of Vivekananda. He tried to weld Hellenic beauty and Indo-Germanic thought into one harmonious whole. But to his universalism, which attained the standards of Leonardo and Alberti with its spiritual empire over life in all forms was added the crown of a religious soul and absolute purity. This beautiful ephebe, to whom all the good things of life and its pleasures were offered, though free and passionate, imposed upon himself a rigourous chastity. Without being tied to any sect, before he had adopted any Credo, he had already the feeling, the profound reason for which I shall show later, that purity of body and soul is a spiritual force, whose fire penetrates into every aspect of life, but is extinguished by the slightest defilement. Moreover, he was overshadowed by a great destiny, and though he was as yet unaware of its direction, he wished to be worthy of it and to realise it.

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[6] That is to say, of the Italian Renaissance.

[7] The temple of the Goddess Sarasvati, the patron of the arts.

The result of such a multiplicity of gifts and contending passions made him live for many years in great turmoil of soul before his personality became fixed. Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one (from 1880 to the end of 1884) he went through a series of intellectual crises increasing in intensity until religious certainty finally put an end to them.

He was first moved by reading Stuart Mill's *Essays* *on Religion,* which caused his first optimistic surface theism, gleaned in fashionable Brahmo Samajist circles, to crumble away. The face of Evil in nature appeared to him, and he revolted against it. But he was powerless to prevent the intrusion of bored disillusion and antique Melancholy[8] (in the sense of Albrecht Dürer). In vain he tried to adopt the theories of Herbert Spencer, with whom he corresponded.[9] He asked the older students in his college classes for counsel, in particular Brajendra Nath Seal.[10] To him he confided his scepticism and begged him to guide him in his search for the truth. It was to Seal that he owed his reading of Shelley and that he bathed his burning soul in the aerial waves of the poet's pantheism.[11] His young mentor then wished to enroll him in the service of the God of Reason—the Parabrahman—a conception particularly his own. Brajendra's rationalism was of a peculiar kind in that it claimed to be an amalgamation of the pure monism of the Vedanta, the Hegelian dialectic of the Absolute idea, and the gospel of the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. He believed that the principle of individualism was "the evil" and Universal Reason "the good." It was then essential that pure reason should be manifested; this was the great modern problem, and Brajendra thought to solve it by Revolution. His revolutionary and imperial rationalism appealed to some sides of Narendra's domineering nature. But the latter's tumultuous personality was not to be confined within such limits. Although his intellect certainly wished to accept (or impose) the sovereignty of universal reason and to make the foundation of morality an imperious negation of individualism, his life would not agree. He was too intoxicated with the beauty of the world and its passions. An attempt to deprive him of it was like condemning a young beast of prey to vegetarianism. His melancholy and anguish redoubled. It was mockery to offer him a diet of immanent Reason, a bloodless God; Being a real Hindu for whom life is the first attribute, if not the very essence of truth, he needed the living revelation, the realisation of the Absolute, God made man—some holy Guru, who could say to him, "I have seen Him. I have touched Him. I have been Him." Nevertheless, his intellect nurtured as it had been in European thought, and the critical spirit inherited from his father revolted against this aspiration of his heart and senses, as will be seen in his first reactions against Ramakrishna.

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[8] A reference to the famous engraving of Albrecht Dürer, Melancholy, representing a desponding archangel, sitting in the midst of the chaos of science. The sense of melancholy is above the ordinary and signifies a soul, saddened and wearied by its vain intellectual researches.

[9] Spencer was astonished, so it is said, by his daring criticisms, and admired the precociousness of his philosophic intellect. According to Saradananda, Naren pursued the study of Western philosophy between his first examination in 1881 and that of 1884 corresponding to our licentiate's degree. He had then read Descartes, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Spinoza, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Auguste Comte and Darwin. But it seems to me that he can only have read them superficially from general treatises and that he did not study their actual works. He also followed a course of medicine, studying the physiology of the brain and nervous system. "The analytic and scientific method of the West had conquered him, and he wished to apply it to the study of Hindu religious ideas." (Saradananda.)

[10] This man of great intellect, at present the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mysore and one of the most solid and erudite philosophers in India, has related his reminiscences of the young Vivekananda in an article written for the *Prabuddha Bharata* of 1907, and reproduced in the *Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. I, pp. 172-177. Although at college he was in the class above Vivekananda, the latter was a little his senior.

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[11] He also read Wordsworth, of all English poets the one who seems most akin to the poets of the Far East.

He was, like all young Bengal intellectuals of his time, drawn by the pure light of Keshab Chunder Sen. It was then at its height and Naren envied it; he could have wished to be Keshab. He was naturally in sympathy with his New Order, and joined it. His name was enrolled on the list of members of the new Brahmo Samaj.[12] The Ramakrishna Mission has since maintained that he could not have been entirely in accord with the spirit of categorical reform held by this Samaj, which ran counter to even the most respectable prejudices of orthodox Hinduism. But I am inclined to disagree with them. The reckless character of young Naren would have delighted in wholesale destruction, and he was not the man to reproach his new companions for iconoclasm. It was only later, and in great part owing to Ramakrishna's influence, that he came to conceive of and profess respect for even antiquated beliefs and customs, provided they were in accordance with long tradition and deeply assimilated into the substance of the nation.[13] But I am convinced that this did not come to pass without a struggle; and it is

[12] His name remained on the list a long time after he had become the Swami Vivekananda, and he told his disciples that he had never withdrawn it. When he was asked in later years, "Do you attack the Brahmo Samaj?" he answered, "Not at all." He considered this society to be a high form of Hinduism. (Cf. *Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. I, Chapter 38, devoted to the Brahmo Samaj.)

[13] In the maturity of his powers he often insisted on this point, that his own Message was not a negation but fulfilment of true Hindu thought. He was a partisan of radical reforms, but he held that they should be carried out by conservative methods. (ibid.)

These are practically the very words of Keshab: "To preach Hindu conservatism in a liberal spirit." (*Indian Empire,* 1884.)

partly this, which explains his first recoil of intellectual mistrust from Ramakrishna. For the time being, however, he had joined the movement of young Brahmos in Bengal for the education and unity of the Indian masses without distinction of caste, race or religion. Some of them attacked orthodox Hinduism even more bitterly than did the Christian missionaries; but it was fatal that Naren's free and living intelligence should have quickly realised the unintelligent narrowness of such critics, who were not free from cross-grained fanaticism, and that his spirit no less than his national pride should have been wounded by them. He would not subscribe to the abdication of Indian wisdom before the badly assimilated knowledge of the West. Nevertheless he continued to attend the meeting of the Brahmo Samaj, but in his heart he was not at rest.

He next imposed upon himself the life of an ascetic, living in a dark, damp room, lying on the ground upon a quilt with books everywhere, making tea on the floor, reading and meditating day and night. He suffered excruciating and stabbing pains in his head, but he did not achieve the reconciliation of the conflicting passions of his nature, whose struggles lasted even into his troubled sleep.

"From my youth up," he relates, "every night just as I fell asleep two dreams took shape. In one I saw myself among the great ones of the earth, the possessor of riches, honours, power and glory; and I felt that the capacity to attain all these was in me. But the next instant I saw myself renouncing all worldly things, dressed in a simple loin-cloth, living on alms, sleeping at the foot of a tree; and I thought that I was capable also of living thus, like the Rishis of old.

Of these two pictures the second took the upper hand and I felt that only thus could a man attain supreme bliss. . . . And I fell asleep in the foretaste of that bliss. . . . And each night it was renewed. . . ."[14]

Such was he at the moment when he went to meet the Master, who was to govern the rest of his life. In the great city where India and Europe meet, he had made the round of the great religious individualities;[15] but he had returned unsatisfied. He sought in vain, tested, rejected. He wandered. . . .

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He was eighteen and preparing for his first University Examination. In November 1880, in the house of a friend, Surendranath Mitra, a rich publican converted to the Indian Christ, during a small festivity at which Naren had sung a beautiful religious hymn, the "falcon's eyes" of Ramakrishna for the first time pierced to the depths of his unsatisfied soul, and fixed his choice upon it.[16] He asked Naren to come to see him at Dakshineswar.

The young man arrived with a band of thoughtless and frivolous friends. He came in and sat down, heedless of his surroundings, without seeming to see or hear anything, wrapt in his own thoughts. Ramakrishna, who was watching him, asked him to sing.

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[14] Extracts from the last volume of the Biography of Ramakrishna (Divya Bhava) by Saradananda, Chapter III.

[15] It is said that his last attempt had been with Devendranath Tagore, who recognised his great gifts.

[16] Ramakrishna said later: "I saw no attention to the body, no vanity, no attachment to outward things in him. And in his eyes: . . . It seemed that some power possessed the interior of his soul. . . . And I thought, 'How is it possible that such a man can live in Calcutta?' . . ."

Naren obeyed, and his song had such a pathetic tone that the Master, like Naren a passionate lover of music, passed into an ecstasy. Here I will leave Naren to speak for himself:

"After I had sung he suddenly got up, and taking me by the hand, led me onto the north verandah, and closed the door behind us. We were alone. Nobody could see us. . . . To my great surprise he began to weep for joy. He held me by the hand and addressed me very tenderly, as if I were somebody he had known familiarly for a long time. He said, 'Ah! You have come so late. Why have you been so unkind as to make me wait so long? My ears are tired of hearing the futile words of other men. Oh! how I have longed to pour out my spirit into the breast of somebody fitted to receive my inner experiences! . . .' He continued thus sobbing the while. Then standing before me with his hands together he said, 'Lord, I know that you are the ancient sage Nara, the incarnation of Narajana,[17] reborn on the earth to take away the misery of humanity.'[18] I was amazed. 'What have I come to see?' I thought. 'He ought to be put in a strait jacket! Why, I am the son of Viswanath Dutt. How dare he speak thus to me. . . .' But I remained outwardly unmoved and let him talk. He took my hand again and said, 'Promise me that you will come to see me again alone, and soon!' . . ."

Naren promised in order to free himself from his strange host, but he vowed within himself never to return. They went back to the common drawing room, where they found the others. Naren sat down apart and watched the personage. He could not find anything strange in his ways or in his words; nothing but an inner logic, which he felt was the fruit of a profound life of absolute renunciation and a striking sincerity. He heard him say (and these words were an answer to his own nocturnal strivings):

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[17] A certain aspect of Brahman, the cosmic Man, the great Hypostasis. (Cf. Paul Masson-Oursel: *op. cit.*, p. 105 et pass.)

[18] So in the first words of his delirium he settled for Vivekananda the duty of social service, to which he was to devote his life, and which distinguishes him from all the other "seers" of India.

"God can be realised. One can see Him and speak to Him as I speak to and see you. But who takes the trouble to do so? People will shed tears for a wife, children or possessions. But who weeps for the love of God? Yet if a man weep sincerely for Him, He will manifest Himself to him."[19]

And to the speaker himself it was obvious that these were no idle words, but that he had proved their truth. Naren could not reconcile the picture before his eyes of this simple and serene sage with the amazing scene he had just witnessed. He said to himself, "He is a monomaniac, but he is not without greatness. He may be mad, but he is worthy of respect." He left Dakshineswar in much confusion of thought, and if he had been asked at that moment what were to be his relations with Ramakrishna, he would doubtless have replied that they would remain as they were.

But the strange vision "worked" upon him.

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[19] Another account given by Vivekananda in his Lecture, *My Master,* (Cf. also *Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. I, p. 212) says that it was he himself who directly addressed Ramakrishna and asked him the eternal question, that he had been taking feverishly round from sage to sage: "Sir, have you seen God?" and that Ramakrishna replied, "Yes my son. I have seen God. I do see Him, just as I see you before me. Only I see the Lord in a much more intense sense, and I can show Him to you."

It is probable that this dialogue took place at a later date, after Vivekananda had become familiar with Ramakrishna.

A month later he returned on foot to Dakshineswar. "I found him alone sitting on his small bed. He was glad to see me, and called me affectionately to sit near him on one side of the bed. But a moment later I saw him convulsed with some emotion. His eyes were fixed upon me, he muttered under his breath, and drew slowly nearer. I thought he was going to make some eccentric remark as on the previous occasion. But before I could stop him, he had placed his right foot on my body. The contact was terrible. With my eyes open I saw the walls and everything in the room whirling and vanishing into nothingness. . . . The whole universe and my own individuality were at the same time almost lost in a nameless void, which swallowed up everything that is. I was terrified, and believed I was face to face with death. I could not stop myself from crying out, 'What are you doing? I have parents at home. . . .' Then he began to laugh, and passing his hand over my breast, he said 'All is well. Let us leave it at that for the moment! It will come, all in good time.' He had no sooner said these words than the strange phenomena disappeared. I came to myself again, and everything, both outside and in, was as before."

I have written down this astonishing account without indulging in futile comment. Whatever the Western reader may think, he cannot help being struck by the power of hallucination in these Indian souls, recalling that of Shakespeare's passionate visionaries. It may, however, be noted in passing that the visionary in this case was anything but a weak, credulous and uncritical spirit. He revolted against his own vision. His strong personality, scenting danger, was violently antipathetic to all hypnotic action; and he asked himself at first if he had not been the victim of some kind of mesmerism. But he had no symptoms of it. Still trembling from the tornado that had swept over him, he remained on his guard. But after this one great shock the rest of the visit was quite normal. Ramakrishna treated his visitor with simple and familiar kindness as if nothing had happened.

At his third visit, probably a week later, Naren was on the defensive with all his critical faculties on the alert. Sri Ramakrishna that day took him to an adjacent garden. After strolling for some time they took their seats in the parlour. Soon the Master fell into a trance and as Narendra watched, he was suddenly touched by him. Narendra immediately lost all outward consciousness. When he came to himself after a while, he saw Ramakrishna looking at him, and stroking his chest.

In after days the Master told his disciples:

"I asked him several questions while he was in that state. I asked him about his antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in this world and the duration of his mortal life. He dived deep into himself and gave fitting answers to my questions. They only confirmed what I had seen and inferred about him. These things shall be a secret, but I came to know that he was a sage who had attained perfection, a past master in meditation, and that the day he learned his real nature, he would give up the body by an act of will. . . ." [20]

But at the time Ramakrishna told him nothing of all this, although he treated him in the light of his special knowledge, and Naren had a privileged place among the disciples.

But Naren had not yet accepted the title of disciple.

[20] Life of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 439 *et seq.*

He did not want to be the disciple of anyone. He was struck by the incomprehensible power of Ramakrishna. It attracted him, as a magnet attracts iron, but he himself was made of stern metal. His reason would not submit to domination. If in his recent relations with the rationalist Brajendra Seal it had been his heart that strove against his intellect now his intellect mistrusted his heart. He was resolved to maintain his independence, and to accept nothing from the Master except what could be rigourously controlled by his own reason. The uncritical faith of the others roused his contempt.

No stranger relations can be imagined than those now established between the young man and the old Guru.[21] Naren detested all forms of sentimental piety, such as tears or anything that savoured of the effeminate. Naren questioned everything. He never allowed his reason to abdicate for a single instant. He alone weighed all Ramakrishna's words, he alone doubted. Far from being shocked, Ramakrishna loved him the better for it. Before meeting Naren he had been heard to pray.

"O Mother, send me someone to doubt my 'realisations.' "

The Mother granted his prayer. Naren denied the Hindu gods, but at the same time he rejected Advaitism, which he termed atheism.[22] He openly mocked the injunctions of the Hindu Scriptures. He said to Ramakrishna,

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[21] Naren lived for five years with Ramakrishna, at the same time keeping a home of his own at Calcutta. He went to Dakshineswar once or twice a week, and sometimes spent four or five days on end with the Master. If he stayed away for a week, Ramakrishna sent for him.

[22] This was the attitude of the Brahmo Samaj.

"Even if millions of men called you God, if I had not proved it for myself, I would never do so."

Ramakrishna laughingly approved, and said to his disciples,

"Do not accept anything because I say so. Test everything for yourselves."

The keen criticism of Naren, and his passionate arguments filled him with joy. He had a profound respect for his brilliant intellectual sincerity with its tireless quest for the truth; he regarded it as a manifestation of Shivaic power, which would finally overcome all illusion. He said,

"Look, look; what power of penetration! He is a raging fire consuming all impurities. Maha-maya,[23] Herself cannot come nearer to him than ten feet! She is held back by the glory She has imparted to him."

And Naren's knowledge caused him such intense joy that it sometimes melted into ecstasy.

But at other times the old Master was hurt by his sharp criticism, delivered as it was without any consideration for others. Naren said to his face,

"How do you know that your realisations are not the creations of your sick brain, mere hallucinations?"

And Ramakrishna in his trouble would go away, and humbly seek comfort of the Mother, who consoled him with the words,

"Patience! Soon Naren's eyes will be opened."

Sometimes when the everlasting discussions between Naren and the disciples wearied him,[24] he would pray,

[23] That is to say, Maya the great—the Great Illusion—the Mother.

[24] He said of these discussions, "Water poured into an empty vessel makes a bubbling noise, but when the vessel is full, no sound is heard. The man who has not found God is full of vain disputation about the existence and attitude of Godhead. But he who has seen Him, enjoys the Divine bliss in silence."

"O Mother, give Naren a little of Your Illusion!" so that the fever of his intellect might be somewhat assuaged, and his heart might touch God.

But the tortured spirit of Vivekananda cried out, "I do not desire God. I desire peace—that is to say, absolute truth, absolute knowledge, absolute infinitude."

He did not see that such a wish overstepped the bounds of reason and showed the imperious unreasonableness of his heart. It was impossible to satisfy his mind with the proof of God. Indian fashion, he maintained:

"If God is real, it is possible to realise Him."

But he gradually discovered that the man of ecstasy, whom he had at first believed to be swayed entirely by the promptings of his heart, was infinitely more master than he was himself in the realm of the intellect. Later he was to say of Ramakrishna,

"Outwardly he was all Bhakta,[25] but inwardly all Jnanin. . . .[26] I am the exact opposite."

But before he came to make such a statement, and before he had yielded of his own free will his proud independence into the Master's hands, he both sought him and fled from him; and between the two there was a reciprocal game of passionate attraction and secret struggle. The brutal frankness of Naren, his lack of consideration for all things that he mistrusted, the implacable war he declared against all charlatanism, and his proud indifference to the opinion of others, drew down upon him enmity and slander, which he was too proud to heed.[27]

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[25] Those who believe through love.

[26] Those who know through the intellect.

Ramakrishna never allowed them to be said in his presence; for he was sure of Naren. He said that the young man was of the purest gold and that no taint of this world could sully him.[28] His only fear was lest so admirable an intellect might lose its way, and the multiplicity of powers striving within him might be put to a bad use, such as the founding of a new sect or of a new party, instead of being consecrated to the work of union and unity. He had a passionate affection for Naren, but his anxious or tender manifestations of it, if Naren stayed away for any length of time, both embarrassed and irritated the latter. Ramakrishna himself was ashamed of them, but he could not help himself. He infuriated Naren by his excessive praise, as when he publicly placed the recognised fame of Keshab below the problematical fame of this young man, who had as yet accomplished nothing. He went to look for him in the streets of Calcutta, and even in the temple of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj,[29] where his unexpected entry during a service provoked a scandal and roused much scornful criticism. Naren, mortified and touched at the same time, spoke harshly to him in order to rid himself of this pursuit. He told him that no man ought to allow himself to be infatuated by another, that if Ramakrishna loved him too much he would forfeit his own spiritual greatness and sink to his level. The simple and pure Ramakrishna listened to him fearfully, and then went to ask the Mother's advice. But he returned comforted.

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[27] Saradananda, who was later one of his friends and most devoted followers, and who has written the best account of his relations with Ramakrishna, admits that he was himself ill-disposed towards Naren, when he met him for the first time at the house of a mutual friend. Naren came in, well dressed and well groomed, with a disdainful air; he sat down humming a Hindu song to himself, and began to smoke without appearing to care for any of the others present. But he took part in the discussion that followed about contemporary literature, and suddenly revealed the greatness of his aesthetic and moral sense, as well as his predilection for Ramakrishna, the only man, he said, whom he had found realising his inner ideal in this life without any compromise. (Cf. the chapter, Vivekananda and Ramakrishna in the last volume of the great Biography of Ramakrishna by Saradananda: *Divya Bhava.*)

[28] Far from shaking Naren's faith in himself, he encouraged it. He gave him privileges over the other disciples; for instance, he allowed him to touch all kinds of impure food, saying that for such as he such matters were immaterial.

"Ah, wretch!" he said to Naren, "I will not listen to you. The Mother has told me that I love you because in you I see the Lord. If the day comes when I can no longer see Him, I shall not be able to bear the sight of you."

Soon their parts were reversed. A time came when Naren's presence was received by Ramakrishna with complete indifference. He did not appear to notice him but occupied himself with the others. This went on for several weeks. Nevertheless Naren always came patiently back. Ramakrishna asked him why, since he no longer spoke to him, and Naren replied,

"It is not just your words that attract me. I love you and need to see you."

The Master's spirit gradually took possession of the rebel disciple. In vain the latter ridiculed Ramakrishna's beliefs, especially the two extremes: the cult of images,

[20] The branch of the Brahmo Samaj that had broken away from Keshab. It was the most uncompromising from the national Hindu point of view; and it is noteworthy that Naren was then a member of it. Ramakrishna had unwittingly many enemies among its members, who bore him a grudge for the influence he exercised over Keshab.

and faith in an Absolute Unity—the fascination of God worked slowly.

"Why do you come here, if you do not want to acknowledge my Mother?" Ramakrishna asked him.

"Must I acknowledge Her, if I come?" replied Naren.

"Well," said the Master, "several days hence you will not only accept Her, but you will weep at the mention of Her name." [30]

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[30] Brajendra Seal has confessed the stupefaction caused by the sight of Narendra the iconoclast, the hater of superstitions and idols, worshipping before Kali and Her priest. He condemned him mercilessly, until the day when curiosity urged him to visit Dakshineswar. He spent an afternoon there and came away in a state of moral and physical astonishment. All his preconceived ideas were wavering. Without understanding it, he was subjugated by the atmosphere which seemed to emanate from the person of Ramakrishna. It may be interesting to trace the unpremeditated reaction of a great intellectual and rationalist thinker, a man high in his University, who to this day has kept his independent judgment.

"I watched with intense interest the transformation that went on under my eyes. The attitude of a young and rampant Vedantist —cum—Hegelian—cum—Revolutionary like myself towards the cult of religious ecstasy and Kali-Worship may be easily imagined; and the spectacle of a born iconoclast and freethinker like Vivekananda, a creative and dominating intelligence, a tamer of souls, himself caught in the meshes of what appeared to me an uncouth, supernatural mysticism, was a riddle which my philosophy of the Pure Reason could scarcely read at the time. . . .

"(For pathological curiosity) at last I went . . . to Dakshineswar, to see and hear Vivekananda's Master, and spent the greater part of a long summer day in the shady and peaceful solitudes of the Temple garden, returning as the sun set amidst the whirl and rush and roar and the awful gloom of a blinding thunderstorm, with a sense of bewilderment as well moral as physical, and a lurking perception of the truth that the law orders the apparently irregular and grotesque, that sense even in its errors is only incipient Reason and that faith in a saving Power *ab extra* is but the dim reflex of an original act of self-determination. And a significant confirmation of all this came in the subsequent life-history of Vivekananda, who, after he had found the firm assur-

It was the same when Ramakrishna wanted to open the doors of Advaitist Vedantism, of identity with the Absolute, to Naren. Naren rejected the idea as blasphemy and madness. He did not let any chance go by of ridiculing it; and one day he and one of the other disciples jeered and gave vent to side-splitting laughter at its extravagance. "This jug," they said, "is God . . . and these flies are God. . . ." From the adjoining room Ramakrishna heard the laughter of the great children. He came in quietly in a semi-conscious state, and touched Naren.[31] Again a spiritual tornado swept him. All at once everything was changed in Naren's eyes. He saw with amazement that nothing existed but God. He went back to his house. All that he saw, touched, ate, was God. . . . He stopped doing anything, intoxicated by Universal Force. His parents became anxious and thought he was ill. He remained in this condition for some days. Then the dream vanished. But its remembrance remained with Naren as a foretaste of the Advaitis state, and he never afterwards allowed himself to deny its existence.

He then passed through a series of mystic storms.

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ance he sought in the saving Grace and Power of his Master, went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man, and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the Self."

(Article of Brajendranath Seal, published in *Prabudha Bharata,* 1907, and reproduced in the *Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* I, 177.)

[31] For scientific men, who study psycho-physiological problems, it is noteworthy that these "touches," which provoked in the subjects concerned immediate experience of changed conditions, were nearly always (if not always) produced when Ramakrishna was in a state of semi-consciousness or of complete hypnosis. There was therefore nothing in them analagous to calculated action of the will independent of the energies governed by it. It might almost be described as a forced descent of another into the abyss he had first descended himself.

He repeated "Shiva . . . Shiva," like a madman. Ramakrishna looked on with compassionate understanding.

"Yes, I remained for twelve years in that condition."

But his leonine nature, which leapt in great bounds from ironic denial to illumination, would never have undergone a lasting transformation, if the citadel had not been mined from within and not from without. The rough scourge of sorrow came suddenly to whip him out of his comfortable doubt, and the luxury of intellectualism on which he prided himself, and brought him face to face with the tragic problem of evil and existence.

At the beginning of 1884 his careless and prodigal father died, suddenly carried off by a heart attack, and the family found itself faced with ruin. There were six or seven mouths to feed, and a swarm of creditors. From that day onwards Naren tasted misery, knew the vain search for employment and the denial of friends. He has told his distress in pages that are among the most poignant of confessions.[32]

"I almost died of hunger. Barefoot I wandered from office to office, repulsed on all sides. I gained experience of human sympathy. This was my first contact with the realities of life. I discovered that she had no room for the weak, the poor, the deserted. Those who several days before would have been proud to help me, turned away their faces, although they possessed the means to do so. The world seemed to me to be the creation of a devil. One burning day, when I could hardly stand upon my feet, I sat down in the shade of a monument. Several friends were there, and one began to sing a hymn about the abundant grace of God. It was like a blow aimed deliberately at my head. I thought of the pitiable condition of my mother and brothers, and cried, 'Stop singing that song! Such fantasies may sound pleasantly in the ears of those who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and whose parents are not at home dying of hunger. Oh yes, there was a time when I too thought like that! But now that I am faced with all the cruelty of life, it rings in my ears like deadly mockery.' My friend was hurt. He could not make allowance for my terrible distress. More than once, when I saw that there was not enough food to go round at home, I went out, telling my mother that I was invited elsewhere, and I fasted. My rich friends sometimes asked me to go to their houses to sing, but practically not a single one of them showed any curiosity about my misfortunes; and I kept them to myself. . . ."

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[32] This account is taken from the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna,* pp. 428 *et seq.*

Throughout this period he continued to pray to God every morning. One day his mother heard him, and, her piety severely shaken by too great misfortune, said to him,

"Fool, be quiet! You have made yourself hoarse with praying to God from your childhood up. And what has He done for you? . . ."

Then he in his turn was filled with anger against God. Why did He not answer his anguished appeals? Why did He allow so much suffering on the earth? And the bitter words of the Pandit Vidyasagar came into his mind:

"If God is good and gracious, why then do millions of people die for want of a few morsels of food?" [33]

A furious revolt arose to heaven. He declared war upon God.

He had never been able to conceal his thoughts and now he spoke openly against God. He proved that He was either non-existent or evil. His reputation as an atheist became established, and as is the practise of devout people, unmentionable motives were adduced for his unbelief, and his habits were maligned. Such dishonesty hardened him, and he took a sombre delight in boasting publicly that in such a depraved world a victim, as he was, of the persecutions of fortune had every right to seek momentary respite in whatever pleasure he might find; and that if he, Narendra, decided that such means were efficacious, he should certainly not shrink from using them for fear of anybody. To some of Ramakrishna's disciples who offered their pious remonstrances, he replied that only a coward believed in God through fear. And he drove them away. At the same time the idea that Ramakrishna might blame him like the rest troubled him. Then his pride revolted. "What does it matter? If a man's reputation rests on such slender foundations, I do not care. I spurn it under foot; . . ."

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[33] The Pandit Vidyasagar (Iswara Chandra, 1820-1891) was a social reformer, the director of the Sanskrit College at Calcutta, and knew Ramakrishna. His memory is held in veneration less for his great learning than for his love of humanity. He was the impotent witness of the famine of 1864 with its more than 100,000 victims, which made him reject God, and devote himself wholly to the service of man. Vivekananda in 1898 spoke of him with hushed respect and without a word of blame during a journey in Kashmir, as was noted down by Sister Nivedita in her account of conversations with the Swami. (*Notes of some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda, Calcutta.* Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.)

All judged him lost except Ramakrishna in his retreat at Dakshineswar, and he kept his confidence in Naren;[34] but he was waiting for the psychological moment. He knew that Naren's salvation could only come from him.

The summer passed. Naren continued his harrassing search for a means of livelihood. One evening when he had eaten nothing, he sank down, exhausted and wet through by the side of the road in front of a house. The delirium of fever raged in his prostrate body. Suddenly it seemed as if the folds enveloping his soul were rent asunder, and there was light.[35] All his past doubts were automatically solved. He could say truly:

"I see, I know, I believe, I am undeceived. . . ."

His mind and body were at rest. He went in and spent the night in meditation. In the morning his mind was made up. He had decided to renounce the world as his grandfather had done, and he fixed a day when this definite vow was to be accomplished.

Now on that very day Ramakrishna, all unknowing, came to Calcutta, and begged Naren to come back with him for the night to Dakshineswar. Naren tried in vain to escape; but he was obliged to follow the Master. That night shut up in his room with him, Ramakrishna began to sing, and his beautiful chant brought tears to the eyes of the young disciple; for he realised that the Master had divined his purpose. Ramakrishna said to him,

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[34] Afterwards Vivekananda said, "Ramakrishna was the only one who had unswerving faith in me. Even my mother and my brothers were not capable of it. His unshakeable confidence joined me to him for ever. He alone knew the meaning of love";

[35] Revelation came always by the same mechanical process at the exact moment when the limit of vitality had been reached, and the last reserves of the will to struggle exhausted.

"I know that you cannot remain in the world. But for my sake, stay in it as long as I live."

Naren went back home. He had found some work in a translation office and in a solicitor's office, but he had no permanent employment, so that the fate of his family was never assured from one day to the next. He asked Ramakrishna to pray for him and his.

"My child," said Ramakrishna, "I cannot offer up those prayers. Why do you not do so yourself?"

Naren went into the temple of the Mother. He was in a state of exalted fervour; a flood of love and faith coursed through him. But when he returned and Ramakrishna asked if he had prayed, Naren realised that he had forgotten to ask for the alleviation of his misery. Ramakrishna told him to go back. He returned a second time and a third time. No sooner did he enter the temple than the purpose of his prayers faded before his eyes. At the third attempt indeed he remembered what he had come to ask, but he was overcome with shame. "What pitiful interests they were, for which to importune the Mother;" He prayed instead,

"Mother, I need nothing save to know and to believe."

From that day a new life began for him. He knew and believed, and his faith, born, like that of Goethe's old harpist,[36] in misery, never forgot the taste of bread soaked in tears, nor his suffering brethren who had shared the crumbs. One sublime cry proclaimed his faith to the world:

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[36] An allusion to some of Goethe's most beautiful *Lieder* in Wilhelm Meister. The greatest European musicians, Schubert, Hugo Wolf, etc., have set them to music.

"The only God in whom I believe, is the sum total of all souls, and above all I believe in my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races. . . ."

The Galilean had conquered.[37] The tender Master of Bengal had broken the resistance of his bride. Ramakrishna in future had no more submissive son than the great Kshatriya, who was born to command. So complete did their union become, that at times they seemed to be identified with each other. It was necessary to exercise a moderating influence over this transported soul, that did not know what it meant to give by halves. Ramakrishna knew the dangers it ran. Its rough and tumultuous course leapt beyond the bounds of reason from knowledge to love, from the absolute need for meditation to the absolute need for action. It yearned to embrace everything at once. During the last days of Ramakrishna's life we shall often see Naren urging the Master to allow him the highest superconscious revelation, the great ecstasy, from which there is no return, the Nirvikalpa Samadhi; but Ramakrishna emphatically refused him.

One day, Swami Shivananda told me, he was present in the garden of Cossipore, near Calcutta, when Naren really attained this state. "Seeing him unconscious, his body as cold as that of a corpse, we ran in great agitation to the Master and told him what had happened. The Master showed no anxiety; he merely smiled and said, 'Very well,' and then relapsed into silence. Naren returned to outward consciousness and came to the Master. The Master said to him, 'Well, now do you understand? This (the highest realisation) will henceforward remain under lock and key. You have the Mother's work to do. When it is finished, She will undo the lock.' Naren replied, 'Master, I was happy in Samadhi. In my infinite joy I had forgotten the world. I beseech you to let me remain in that state;' 'For shame,' cried the Master. 'How can you ask such things? I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man; . . . This realisation will become so natural to you, thanks to the Mother, that in your normal state you will realise the Unique Divinity in all beings; you will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor."

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[37] The cry of the Emperor Julian as he was dying, after having fought in vain against Christ.

He had discerned the part for which Vivekananda was cast, and against his will he forced him to play it.

"Ordinary souls," he said, "fear to assume the responsibility of instructing the world. A worthless piece of wood can only just manage to float, and if a bird settles on it immediately it sinks. But Naren is different. He is like the great tree trunks, bearing men and beasts upon the bosom of the Ganges." [38]

He had marked on the giant's forehead the sign of St. Christopher [39]—the carrier of men.

[38] Gospel of Ramakrishna, II, 42.

[39] An allusion to the Christian legend of St. Christopher (whose name means the carrier of Christ) and who was a giant. He carried people on his shoulders across a river, and one day the Christ Child came to him. (Cf. the last page of the novel, *Jean Christophe.*)

XI

THE SWAN SONG

AND so from 1881 onwards he lived at Dakshineswar surrounded by disciples, who loved him as a father, lulled by the sweet murmur of the Ganges. The eternal song of the river, turning and flowing northwards with the incoming tide at noon was the undercurrent of his beautiful companionship. And it mingled at dawn and sunset with the chime of bells, the ringing of conches, the melody of the flute, (rasunchauki), the clashing of cymbals and the temple hymns, that punctuated the days of the gods and goddesses.[1] The intoxicating perfume of the sacred garden was borne like incense on the breeze. Between the columns of the semi-circular verandah with its sheltering awning, sails, multicoloured like a swarm of butterflies, could be seen passing along the river, the image of Eternity.

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[1] The book containing the conversations *(the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)* recalls at every turn the setting and the atmosphere.

Before daybreak the bells softly announced the service of matins. The lights were kindled. In the hall of music the morning hymns were played by flutes accompanied by drums and cymbals. The east was not yet red before flowers had already been gathered in the garden as an offering to the Gods. The disciples, who had spent the night with the Master, meditated as they sat near the edge of his bed. Ramakrishna got up and walked about naked singing in his sweet voice; he tenderly communed with the Mother. Then all the instruments played their symphony in concert. The disciples performed their ablutions; then returned to find the Master on the verandah; and the conversations continued overlooking the Ganges.

At noon the bells announced the end of worship in the temples of Kali and Vishnu and the twelve temples of Shiva. The sun burned down. The breeze blew from the south, the tide rose. After a meal the Master took a short rest and then the conversations began again.

At night the temple lamplighter kindled the lamps. One lamp burned in a corner of Ramakrishna's room where he sat absorbed. The music of conches and the temple bells announced the evening service. Under a full moon the conversations continued.

But the precincts of the sanctuary were throbbing with the ceaseless waves of a different human river—pilgrims, worshippers, pandits,[2] religious and curious persons of all sorts and conditions from the great neighbouring city or other parts of India crowding to see and overwhelm with questions the mysterious man, who yet did not consider himself any way remarkable. He always answered them in his charming patois with unwearied patience and that air of familiar good grace, which, without losing contact with the deep realities, allowed nothing to go unobserved in the scenes and the everyday people passing before him. He could both play the child and judge as the sage. This perfect, laughing, loving, penetrating spontaneity, to which nothing human was alien, was the chief secret of his charm. In truth such a hermit was very different from those of our Christian world! If he sought out and absorbed sorrow, it disappeared with him; nothing morose or austere could grow in his soil. The great purifier of men who could free the soul from its swaddling clothes and wash away all stain making a saint of a Giriṣh by his indulgent smile and his piercing and serene glance, would not admit into the air of the beautiful garden of Dakshineswar, redolent of the scent of roses and jasmine, the morbid idea of shameful sin veiling its nakedness by an eternal preoccupation with itself. He said:

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[2] It was at this time (1882) that Ramakrishna went to visit the Pandit Vidyasagar. Their conversations have been recorded.

"Certain Christians and Brahmos see in a sense of sin the sum total of religion. Their ideal of a devout man is one who prays, 'O Lord, I am a sinner![3] Deign to pardon my sins! . . .' They forget that a sense of sin is a sign of the first and the lowest step of spiritual development. They do not take the force of habit into consideration. If you say, 'I am a sinner,' eternally, you will remain a sinner to all eternity. . . . You ought rather to repeat, 'I am not bound, I am not bound. . . . Who can bind me? I am the son of God, the King of Kings. . . .' Make your will work and you will be free! The idiot who repeats without stopping, 'I am a slave,' ends by really becoming a slave. The miserable man, who repeats tirelessly, 'I am a sinner,' really becomes a sinner. But that man is free who says, 'I am free from the bondage of the world. I am free. Is not the Lord our Father? . . .' Bondage is of the mind, but freedom is also of the mind. . . ."[4]

He let the wind of his joy and freedom blow on all around him. And languid souls, oppressed by the weight of the tropical sky, unfolded again their faded leaves. He comforted the weariest with the words,

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[3] What would he have said if he had known the Oratorian of the XVIIth century, François de Clugny (1637-1694) whom the Abbé Brémond, has revived for us. He revels in a state of sin, and has no other purpose in life than to develop his "Mystic of Sinners" in three books reeking of sin, yet written in perfect innocence. (1. The Devotion of Sinners by a Sinner. 2. The Manual of Sinners by a Sinner. 3. Concerning the Prayers of Sinners by a Sinner.)

Cf. Henri Brémond: *La Métaphysique des saints,* I, p. 279 *et seq.*

[4] *The Gospel,* I, 293 and 178.

He repeats this great saying, which I should like to inscribe on the heart of all believers: "God can never appear where there is shame, hatred or fear." (Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings, I, par. 316.)

"The rains will come. Patience! You will become green again."

It was the home of freed souls—those who were—and those who would be—time does not count in India. The Sunday receptions often partook of the nature of little festivals, Sankirtans, and on ordinary days his interviews with his disciples never took the form of doctrinal instruction. Doctrine was immaterial. The only essential was practise suited to each spirit, to each occasion of life with the object of drawing out the essence of life in each man, while he exercised full liberty of spirit. All means were good; inward concentration as well as the free play of the intellect, brief ecstasies as well as rich parables, laughing stories and even the observation of the comedy of the universe by sharp and mocking eyes.

The Master is sitting on his little bed and listening to the confidences of the disciples. He shares in their intimate cares and family affairs; he affectionately prods the resigned Yogananda, curbs the impetuous Vivekananda, and mocks the superstitious ghosts of Niranjanananda. He loves to race these young runaway colts against each other. Then he will fling into the confusion of impassioned argument just the pregnant and mischievous remark that will enlighten them and bring them back at a walking pace. Without seeming to use the reins he knows how to restore to the golden mean those who go too far and those who do not go far enough, how to awaken the slumbering spirit and how to restrain excess of zeal. His eyes can rest with tenderness on the pure face of his St. John, Premananda (Baburam), one of those whom he classes with the "Nityasiddhas"—those who are pure and perfect before their birth [5] and have no need of instruction—or sparkle with irony when faced with exaggerated Puritanism.

"Too much concentration on ceremonial purity becomes a plague. People afflicted with this disease have no time to think of man or God."

He kept the neophytes from the useless and dangerous practises of the Raja Yoga.[6] What point was there in risking life and health when all that was necessary was to open the eyes and heart in order to meet God at every step?

"Arjuna invoked Sri Krishna as the Absolute. . . . Krishna said to him, 'Come for a while and see what I am like.' He led him to a certain spot and asked him, 'What do you see?' 'A great tree,' said Arjuna, 'with bunches of berries hanging from it.' 'No, my friend,' said Sri Krishna. 'Draw near and look closer; these are not blackberries but innumerable Sri Krishnas. . . .' "[7]

And was there any need for pilgrimages to holy places?

"It is the sanctity of men that makes the sanctity of places. Otherwise how can a place purify a man?"

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[5] To this group of the elect Narendra, Rakhal and Bhavanath also belonged (Gospel I, 238). It is noteworthy that their particular type of spirit had nothing to do with their selection. Baburam was a foreordained Jnanin and not a Bhakta.

[6] Cf. Saradananda: Ramakrishna said to his disciples, "These practises are no longer for this iron age of Kali, when human beings are very feeble and short-lived. They have no time to run such grave risks. And it is no longer necessary. The sole objects of these practises is concentration of mind; and this is easily attained by all who meditate with piety. The grace of the Lord has made the way of realisation easy. It is only necessary to carry back to Him that power of love, which we pour out on the beings surrounding us." (A freely condensed translation.)

[7] Gospel, II, 16.

God is everywhere. God is in us. Life and the Universe are His Dream."

But while with his clever fingers he embroidered apologues [8] upon this everlasting theme the little peasant of Kamarpukur, who united in himself the two natures of Martha and Mary,[9] knew how to recall his disciples to practical life and humble domestic details; he did not allow idleness, uncleanness nor disorder, and in these respects he could teach the sons of the great middle classes; he himself set the example, scouring his house and garden.

Nothing escaped his eyes. He dreamed, he saw, he acted, and his gay wisdom always kept the gift of childlike laughter. This is how he amused himself by mimicking worldlings and false zealots.

"The Master imitated a Kirtani (a professional singer of religious hymns), to the great amusement of the disciples. The Kirtani and her troupe made their entrance into the assembly. She was richly dressed and held a coloured handkerchief in her hand. If some venerable gentleman came in she greeted him as she sang, and said to him, 'Please come in!' And she would raise her sari on her arms to show the ornaments adorining it. The Master's mimicry made the disciples roar with laughter. Paltu rolled upon the ground. The Master said, smiling at him, 'What a child! Paltu, do not go and tell your father. The slight esteem in which he holds me would vanish entirely. He has become an Englishman pure and simple!' . . ."

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[8] Here is one beautiful example among many others:

"A woodcutter went to sleep and dreamed. A friend woke him up. 'Ah!' said the woodcutter, 'why did you disturb me? I had become a great king, the father of seven children. My sons were accomplished in war and the arts. I was enthroned and occupied with affairs of state. Why did you shatter this happy world?'

The friend replied, 'What harm have I done? It was only a dream.'

'You do not understand,' the woodcutter answered. 'To be a king in a dream is as true as being a woodcutter. If to be a woodcutter is real, to be a king in a dream is real also.'" (Gospel II, 235.)

[9] The Martha and Mary of the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter X.

Here are some other types as he described them,

"There are people," said Ramakrishna, "who never want to chatter so badly as at daily worship. But being forbidden to speak, they gesticulate and grimace with closed lips: 'Euh! Euh! Bring me this. . . . Pass me that. . . . Chut! Chut! . . .' One is telling his beads, but while so engaged he sees the fishmonger, and while his beads slip through his fingers he has shown him the fish he wants. . . . A woman went to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges. She ought to have been thinking about God, but this is what she was gossiping: 'What jewels are they offering your son? . . . Such and such a person is ill. . . . Such and such a person has gone to see his fiancée. . . . And do you think the dowry will be a large one?. . . . Harish adores me, he cannot do without me for a single hour. . . . I have not been able to come for a long time; the engagement of so-and-so's daughter has taken place and I have been so busy! and ta, ta, ta. . . .' She came to bathe in the sacred waters, but she thinks of anything but that. . . ."

And at that point as his glance fell upon one of his audience, he passed into Samadhi.[10]

When he returned again to earth he resumed the thread of his interrupted discourse without a break, or else sang one of his beautiful songs to the Mother "with the blue skin" or to dark Krishna the Beloved.[11]

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[10] Gospel, II, 285-6.

"Oh, the sound of the smooth flute played in the wood yonder! I come! I come! I must. . . . My Beloved with the dark skin awaits me. . . . O my friends, say, will you not come with me? . . . My Beloved! . . . I fear that to you he is nothing but a name, a sound void of meaning. . . . But to me he is my heart, my soul, my life! . . ."

"Plunge, plunge, plunge in the depths, O my soul! Plunge into the Ocean of Beauty! . . . Go and search the regions deeper than the depths of the seas! Thou wilt attain the jewel, the treasure of Prema (Divine Love). In thy heart is the Brindaban (the legendary home) of the God of Love. Go and seek, go and seek, go and seek! And thou shalt find. Then the lamp of knowledge will burn inextinguishably. Who is this being that steers a boat over the earth—over the earth—over the solid earth? . . ."

"Companion of the Absolute, O Mother, Thou art plunged in the bliss of Play. . . . The wine of joy intoxicates. Thy feet reel, but never lose their balance. The Absolute, Thy husband, is lying at Thy side, motionless. Thou drawest Him to Thy breast, and loseth all control of Thyself. The Universe trembles beneath Thy feet. Madness is in Thine eyes and in the eyes of Thy husband. . . . In truth the world is a thing of joy. . . . O my Mother with the blue skin! . . ."[12]

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[11] These colours had a symbolic sense for Ramakrishna. The dark blue of the Mother brought the depths of the sky to his mind.

[12] Gospel, *passim.*

His song shares in the wine of love intoxicating the Mother.

"One of his glances," Vivekananda once said, "could change a whole life."

And he spoke from experience, this Naren, who had upheld his philosophic doubts in passionate revolt against Ramakrishna, until he felt them melting in his constant fire and avowed himself vanquished. He had proved the truth of what Ramakrishna had told him: that "living faith may be given and received in a tangible fashion and more truly than anything else in the world." Ramakrishna's certainty was so gentle yet so strong that the most brutal denials of these young people made him smile; he was so certain that they would disappear like morning mist before the midday sun. When Kaliprasad assailed him with a torrent of denials, he said,

"My son, do you believe in God?"

"No."

"Do you believe in religion?"

"No, nor in the Vedas, nor in any scripture. I do not believe in anything spiritual."

The Master indulgently replied,

"My son, if you had said that to any other Guru, what would have happened to you? But go in peace! Others have passed through these trials before you. Look at Naren! He believes. Your doubts will also be enlightened. You will believe."

And Kaliprasad later became the holy apostle, Abhedananda.

Many university men, sceptics and agnostics were similarly touched by this little man, who said the simplest things in his peasants' language, but whose inner light pierced to the depths of the soul. There was no need for his visitors to confess themselves.

"The eyes," he said, "are the windows of the soul." He read through them at the first glance. In the midst of a crowd he could go straight to a bashful visitor, who was hiding from him, and put his finger on his doubt, his anxiety, his secret wound. He never preached. There was no soul-searching or sadness. Just a word, a smile, the touch of his hand, communicated a nameless peace, a happiness for which men yearned. It is said that a young man on whom his glance rested stayed for more than a year in an ecstasy, wherein he did nothing but repeat:

"Lord! Lord! My well-beloved! My well-beloved!"

The Master forgave everything, for he believed in infinite Kindness. If he saw that some of those who asked his help were not fortunate enough to attain the God, whom they sought, in this life, he desired to communicate to them at least a foretaste of bliss.

No word with him was only a word; it was an act, a reality.

He said,

"Do not speak of love for your brother! Realise it! Do not argue about doctrine and religions. There is only one. All rivers flow to the ocean. Flow and let others flow too! The great stream carves out for itself according to the slope of its journey—according to race, time and temperament—its own distinct bed. But it is all the same water. . . . Go. . . . Flow on towards the Ocean! . . ."

The force of his joyously flowing stream communicated itself to all souls. He was the power, he was the slope, he was the current; and the other streams and brooks ran towards his river. He was the Ganges itself.

XII

THE RIVER RE-ENTERS THE SEA

HE was nearing the Ocean. The end was approaching. His feeble body was almost daily consumed in the fire of ecstasy and worn out by his constant gift of himself to the starving crowds. Sometimes like a sulky child he complained to the Mother of the flood of visitors devouring him day and night. In his humorous way he said to Her:[1]

"Why do you bring hither all these people, who are like milk diluted with five times its own quantity of water? My eyes are destroyed with blowing the fire to dry up the water! My health is gone. It is beyond my strength. Do it Yourself, if You want it done. This (pointing to his body) is nothing but a burst drum, and if You go on beating it day in and day out, how long do you think it will last?"[2]

But he never turned anybody away. He said:

"Let me be condemned to be born over and over again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of help to a single soul!"

And again:

"I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man!"[3]

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[1] I am quite sure that some of our good believers of the Middle Ages, such as the men of the people in Picardy and Burgundy, must sometimes have said the same thing.

[2] *Life of Sri Ramakrishna,* p. 694.

[3] Vivekananda: *My Master.*

He even reproached himself for his ecstasies, because they took time that might otherwise have been given to others.

"O Mother, stop me from enjoying them! Let me stay in my normal state, so that I can be of more use in the world."

During his last days when his disciples protected him in spite of himself from the importunity of devotees, he said:

"How I suffer because no one needs my help today!"[4]

His great friend, the illustrious chief of the Brahmo Samaj, Keshab Chunder Sen, preceded him in death. He died in 1884. With tears in his eyes, Ramakrishna said of him shortly before his death that "the rose tree is to be transplanted because the gardener wants beautiful roses of him."

Afterwards he said,

"Half of me has perished."

But the other half, if it is possible to use such an expression, was the humble people. He was as easy of access to them, if not more so, as to the most learned; and among the familiar friends of his last years he counted, in the same category as the disciples so dear to his heart, simple people, madmen of God. Such an one was old Gopaler Ma, whose simple story is worthy of a place among the Franciscan legends:

An old woman of sixty, widowed while still a girl,[5] she had dedicated herself to the Lord. The hunger of her unassuaged maternal love had made her for thirty years adopt the child Krishna, Gopala, as her own, until it had become a harmless mania. No sooner had she met Ramakrishna than his God-filled glance made little Gopala issue from her. The warm compassion of the Master, which made the hidden desires and sorrows of those who came near him his own, lent inspiration to the unsatisfied dream of the childless mother, and he put the God Child into her arms. From that moment the little Gopala never left the mother, who had adopted him. Henceforward she did not pray; she had no need to pray, for she lived in unbroken communion with her God. She threw her rosary into the river and spent her days prattling with the Child. This state lasted two months and then was mitigated; the Child only appeared in moments of meditation. But the old woman's heart was filled with happiness, and Ramakrishna tenderly regarded her joy. But his ever present sense of fun made him ask the old woman to tell her story to the haughty Naren, so proud of his critical reason, who held such visions to be stupid and morbid illusions. The old woman quite simply interrupted her maternal chatter, and made Naren her judge:

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[4] Mukerji, *loc. cit.*

[5] For the benefit of my Western readers I would remind them that Hindu religious law strictly forbids the remarriage of widows, and that against this oppressive rule many of the great Hindu religious and social reformers have been ceaselessly striving for the last hundred years.

"Sir," she said to him, "I am only a poor ignorant woman. I do not rightly understand things. You are learned. Tell me, do you think it is true?"

Naren, deeply moved, answered:

"Yes mother, it is quite true."

* * *

It was in 1884 that Ramakrishna's health took a serious turn. While he was in a trance he dislocated his left arm and it was very painful. A great change took place in him. He divided his infirm body and his wandering soul into two. He no longer spoke of "I." He was no longer "me." He called himself "This."[6] The sick man more intensely than before perceived, "Lila . . . the Play . . . The God who disports Himself in men. . . ." The man roughly seized his real self and then fell into silent amazement; his joy knew no bounds, as if he had suddenly and unexpectedly met one of his dear ones. . . . "When Shiva saw his real self he cried, 'Such am I! Such am I!' and danced for joy."

In April the following year his throat became inflamed. Overstrain from constant talking and the dangerous Samadhis, which made blood flow in his throat, certainly had something to do with it.[7] The

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[6] From the unpublished Memoirs of Ramakrishnananda, who nursed him during his last months. Cf. Sister Devamata: *Sri Ramakrishna and his Disciples.* (These notes have been communicated to me in manuscript.)

[7] But there was more in it than this. Like some famous Christian mystics (a) he healed others by taking their ills upon himself. In a vision his body appeared to him covered with sores, the sins of others: "He took upon himself the Karma of others." And to this fact he owed his last illness. He had become the scapegoat of humanity.

The idea of suffering the ills of others in his own body, and thus relieving them when a certain degree of sanctity has been attained, is a very old one in India; and Swami Ashokananda, whom I have questioned on the subject, has given me some striking illustrations from the Holy Books—from the Mahabharata (Adi Parva, Chapter 84, and Shanti Parva, Chapter 261)—from the sayings of Buddha, and the life of Chaitanya in the XVth century. All spiritual personages do not possess this power. It only belongs theologically to the Avataras (Incarnations) and to the chosen souls, their attendants. Neither pious men nor saints possess it, even after they have attained divine realisations, although popular superstitition falsely attributes it to them in these days, and simple people may often be seen approaching Sannyasins and Sadhus (as doctors he consulted forbade both speech and ecstasy, but he paid no attention to them. At a great Vaishnava religious festival he spent himself without measure, and in return the disease grew worse. It became practically impossible for him to eat. Nevertheless he continued to receive those who came to him day and night.

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also happened to Jesus) in the hope of unloading upon them their physical and spiritual ills. It is still a common belief in India. One of its consequences is the so-called Guruvada. If a spiritual person accepts a disciple, not only does he give him spiritual instruction, but he takes upon himself everything that might be an obstacle in his disciple's Karma—all his sins. The Guru then has to suffer for the Karmas of his disciples, for nobody can cancel a single Karma; it is merely transferred to another. Swami Ashokananda has added this to show to what point the belief of expiation by proxy is enrooted in the spirit of the best minds in India today. "It is not just a theory with us. We have seen examples of it, as when the immediate disciples of Ramakrishna suffered for having thus taken upon themselves the evils of others, either in their capacity as Gurus or by the effect of simple touch. They have often spoken of their sufferings on this account."

(a) In particular St. Lydwine, who was charged with the physical sufferings of others, St. Marguerita Maria, who took upon herself the sufferings of souls in Purgatory, St. Catherine of Siena and Marie de Vallées, who prayed for the pains of hell in order to save other souls from falling into them, and St. Vincent de Paul, who was deprived of his faith for seven years in order to give faith to an unbeliever.

Such sacrifices by proxy are in conformity with pure Christian Catholic doctrine, which considers humanity as the mystic body of Christ. Christ Himself set the example. The prophet Isaiah, who realised the Messiah in advance (LIII. 45) said, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions. . . . The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed." The Sacrifice of the Cross has always been considered by the Catholic Church as the one complete and universal expiation. Thus between ancient India and Judea of the Prophets and of Christ there is the same kindred thought, born of the universal urge of the soul and belonging to the most profound depths of human nature. Cf. also the familiar words of Christ, when He instituted the Lord's Supper. "This is my blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (St. Matthew, XXVI, 28.)

Then one night he had hemorrhage of the throat. The doctors diagnosed cancer. His chief disciples persuaded him to put himself for a time under the care of Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar of Calcutta. In September, 1885, a small house was rented where Ramakrishna's wife found a corner for herself so that she might supervise his régime. The most faithful disciples watched during the night. The majority of them were poor, and they mortgaged, borrowed or pawned their effects in order to pay the expenses of the Master's illness—an effort that cemented their union. Dr. Sarkar was a rationalist, who did not share the religious views of Ramakrishna, and told him so frankly. But the more he came to know his patient, the deeper did his respect for him become, until he treated him for nothing. He came to see him three times a day and spent hours with him [8] (which, it may be observed in passing, was perhaps not the best way to make him better). He said to him:

"I love you so dearly because of your devotion to truth. You never deviate by a hair's breadth from what you believe to be true. . . . Do not imagine that I am flattering you. If my father was in the wrong I should tell him so."

But he openly censured the religious adoration rendered to him by the disciples.

"To say that the Infinite came down to earth in the form of a man is the ruin of all religions."

Ramakrishna maintained an amused silence, but the disciples grew animated in these discussions, which only served to increase their mutual esteem; their faith in their Master, whom suffering seemed to illuminate, was strengthened. They tried to understand why such a trial was imposed upon him, and divided into groups holding different views. The most exalted, headed by Girish the redeemed sinner, declared that the Master himself had willed his illness, so that he might establish round him the communion of apostles. The rationalists with Naren as their mouthpiece admitted that the Master's body was subject to the laws of nature like other men's. But they all recognised the Divine presence in the dying man; and on the day of the great annual festival of Kali, of which Ramakrishna to their surprise made no mention, but spent it absorbed in ecstasy, they realised that the Mother was dwelling within him.[9] The exaltation excited by this belief had its dangers, the chief of them being an access of convulsive sentimentalism. They had—

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[8] He was present during several ecstasies and studied them from a medical point of view. A study of his notes would be of great interest for European science. It is known that a stethoscopic examination of the heart and the condition of the eyes during Samadhi show all the symptoms of the condition of death.

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[9] Among the crowds wishing to see the inspired man, there came on October 31, 1885, a Christian from Northern India, Prabhudayal Misra. He had an interview with Ramakrishna, which gives a typical example of the spirit of synthesis enveloping in its accommodating atmosphere the confessions of men holding seemingly contradictory views, when they have been filtered through the Indian soul. This Indian Christian found it quite possible to believe at the same time in Christ and Ramakrishna! People were present during the following conversation:

The Christian: It is the Lord, who shines through all creatures.

Ramakrishna: The Lord is one, but He is called by a thousand names.

The Christian: Jesus is not simply the Son of Mary; He is God Himself. *(And then he turned to the disciples and pointed to Ramakrishna)* and this is a man whom you see before you; but at times he is none other than God Himself, and you do not recognise Him."

At the end of the interview Ramakrishna told him that his longing for God would be fulfilled. And the Christian made him the gift of himself.

or pretended to have—visions and ecstasies with laughter, song and tears. Naren then showed for the first time the vigour of his reason and his will. He treated them with contempt. He told them that "the Master's ecstasies had been bought by a life of heroic austerity and desperate conflict for the sake of knowledge; that their effusions were nothing but the vapourings of sick imaginations—when they were not lies. Those who were ill ought to take more care of themselves! Let them eat more and so react against spasms which were worthy only of ridiculous females! And let them beware! Of those who encouraged a religion of ostentatious emotion eighty per cent became scoundrels and fifteen per cent lunatics." His words acted like a cold douche. They were ashamed and the majority humbly confessed that their ecstasies were shams. Naren's action did not stop there. He gathered these young people together and imposed upon them a virile discipline. In their need for action he advised them to devote themselves to some definite object. The young lion's cub began to assert himself in those days as the future sovereign of the Order, although he himself was not free from his own difficulties and struggles. For him these days marked the crisis of despair, when he had to make the final choice between the conflicting forces of his nature—harrowing days, fruitful days, preparing the soul for harvest.

Ramakrishna grew worse. Dr. Sarkar advised his removal from Calcutta to the country. Towards the middle of December 1885 he was taken to a house in the suburbs in the midst of the beautiful gardens of Cossipore, and there he spent the last eight months of his mortal life. Twelve of his young chosen disciples never left him until the end.[10] Naren directed their activities and their prayers. They begged the Master to join with them in praying for his recovery, and the visit of a Pandit, who shared their faith, gave them an opportunity to renew their entreaties.

"The Scriptures," said the Pandit to Ramakrishna, "declare that saints like you can cure yourselves by an effort of will."

"My spirit has been given to God once and for all. Would you have me ask it back?"

His disciples reproached him for not wishing to be restored to health.

"Do you think my sufferings are voluntary? I wish to recover, but that depends on the Mother."

"Then pray to Her."

"It is easy for you to say that, but I cannot speak the words."

Naren begged.

"For our sakes!"

"Very well," said the Master sweetly. "I will try what I can do."

They left him alone for several hours. When they returned the Master said,

"I said to her, 'Mother, I can eat nothing because of my suffering. Make it possible for me to eat a little!' She pointed you all out to me and said, 'What! Thou canst eat through all these mouths!' I was ashamed and could not utter another word."

Several days later he said,[11]

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[10] Narendra, Rakhal, Baburam, Niranjan, Yogin, Latu, Tarek, the two Gopals, Kali, Sasi, and Sarat. Ramakrishna said that his illness had divided the disciples for him into those of the "Inner Circle (Antaranya) and those of the Outer Circle (Bahiranga.)"

[11] On December 23, 1885 according to M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta), who noted it down in his *Gospel,* II. 354.

"My teaching is almost finished. I cannot instruct people any longer; for I see the whole world is filled with the Lord.[12] So I ask myself, 'Whom can I teach?' "

On January 1, 1886 he felt better and walked a few steps in the garden. There he blessed his disciples.[13] The effects of his blessing manifested themselves in different ways—in silent ecstasy or in loquacious transports of joy. But all were agreed that they received as it were an electric shock, an access of power, so that each one realised his chosen ideal at a bound. (The distinguishing characteristic of Ramakrishna as a religious chief was always that he did not communicate a precise faith, but the energy necessary for faith; he played the part, if I may say so, of a mighty spiritual dynamo). In their abounding joy the disciples in the garden whom the Master had blessed, called to those in the house to come and share the bliss of his benediction. In this connection an incident took place that might have come from the Christian Gospel—the humble Latu and Sarat the Brahmin were taking advantage of the Master's absence to clean his room and make his bed. They heard the calls and saw the whole scene from above; but they continued their task of love, thus renouncing their share of joy.

Naren also remained unsatisfied. His father's loss, worldly cares and the fever in his own heart consumed him. He saw the fulfilment of all the others and felt himself abandoned. There had been no response to his anguish, no comforting ray to cheer him. He begged Ramakrishna to allow him to relieve his misery by several days of Samadhi; but the Master rebuked him severely (he kept his indulgence for those from whom he expected least) and reproached him for such "base thoughts." He must make some arrangement for his family and then his troubles would be at an end and he would receive everything. Naren wept like a lost sheep, and fled through Calcutta and the fields, covered with dust and the straw of a stack into which he had run—he groaned, he was consumed with desire for the inaccessible, and his soul knew no rest. Ramakrishna, tenderly and pityingly, watched his wild course from afar; he knew quite well that before the divine prey could be brought down panting, he would have to pick up the scent. He felt that Naren's condition was remarkable, for in spite of boasting his unbelief, he was homesick for the Infinite. He knew him to be blessed among men in proportion as he was proven. He softly caressed Naren's face before the other disciples. He recognised in him all the signs of Bhakta—knowledge through love. The Bhaktas, unlike the Jnanins (believers through knowledge of the mind) do not seek liberation. They must be born and reborn for the good of humanity; for they are made for the love and the service of mankind. So long as an atom of desire remains they will be reincarnated. When all desires are torn from the heart of mankind then at last they will attain Mukti (liberation). But the Bhaktas never aspire to it themselves. And that is why the loving Master, whose heart was the home of all living beings, and who could never forget them, always had a preference for the Bhaktas, of whom the greatest was Naren.[14]

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[12] Literally, "All is Rama."

[13] Each received an appropriate benediction, so it is said.

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[14] "The Jnanin rejects Maya. Maya is like a veil (which he dispels). Look, when I hold this handkerchief in front of the lamp, you can no longer see its light." Then the Master held the

He did not hide the fact that he regarded him as his heir. He said to him one day,

"I leave these young people in your charge. Busy yourself in developing their spirituality."

And in preparation for a monastic life he ordered them to beg their food from door to door without distinction of caste. Towards the end of March he gave them the saffron robe, the sign of the Sannyasin, and some kind of monastic initiation.

The proud Naren set the example of renunciation. But it was with great difficulty that he abdicated his spiritual pride. The devil would have offered him in vain (as to Jesus) the kingdoms of this world, but he would soon have found a chink in his armour if he had proposed sovereignty of soul to him. One day in order to test his spiritual power Naren told

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handkerchief between him and the disciples and said, "Now you can no longer behold my face."

"The Bhakta does not reject Maya. He worships Mahamaya (the Great Illusion). He gives himself to Her and prays, 'Mother, get out of my way! Only so can I hope to realise Brahman.' "

"The Jnanin denies the three states, the waking state, the dream and the deep sleep; the Bhakta accepts all three."

So Ramakrishna's tenderness, his natural preference, was for those who accepted everything, even Illusion, who affirmed and loved everything, who denied nothing, since Evil and Illusion itself are of God.

"It is not good to say from the very first, 'I see the Impersonal God.' Everything I see—men, women, animals, flowers, trees—is God."

The image of the veil to which Maya is compared is also given at other times in the form of the beautiful parable of Sita and Rama:—

"Rama, Lakshmana his brother and Sita were walking in the forest, Rama went first, then Sita, then Lakshmana. Sita was between the two brothers and so prevented Lakshmana from seeing Rama; but knowing how this made him suffer, in her tenderness and kindness, she sometimes leaned to one side so that he could see his brother."

his companion, Kaliprasad, to touch him while he was in a state of meditation. Kali did so and immediately fell into the same state. Ramakrishna heard of it and rebuked Naren severely for casting his seed into the ground for a frivolous object, and he categorically condemned the transmission of ideas from one to the other. To attempt anything against complete freedom of spirit was anathema. You should help others, but you must not substitute your thought for theirs.

A little time afterwards Naren, while meditating had the sensation of a light shining behind his head. Suddenly he lost consciousness and was absorbed into the Absolute. He had fallen into the depths of the terrible Nirvikalpa Samadhi, which he had sought for so long, and which Ramakrishna had refused to allow him. When, after a long time he returned to himself, it seemed to him that he no longer had a body, but that he was nothing but a face, and he cried out, "Where is my body?" The other disciples were terrified and ran to the Master, but Ramakrishna said calmly,

"Very well, let him stay like that for a time! He has worried me long enough."

When Naren again came down to earth he was bathed in ineffable peace. He approached the Master. Ramakrishna said to him,

"Now the Mother has shown you everything. But this revelation will remain under lock and key, and I shall keep the key. When you have accomplished the Mother's work you will find this treasure again."

And he advised him what to do for his health during the succeeding days.

The nearer he drew to his end, the more detached he became. He spread his serene heaven over the disciple's sorrow. The *Gospel,* written practically at the bedside of the dying man, records the harmonious murmurs of his soul like a stream in the night amid the heavy silence of the apostles, while in the moonlight the branches of the trees in the garden rustled gently shaken by the warm breeze of the south. To his friends, his loved ones, who were inconsolable at the thought of his loss,[15] he said in a half whisper,

"Radha said to Krishna, 'O Beloved, dwell in my heart and do not come again in your human form!' But soon she languished for the sight of the human form of her Beloved. But the will of the Lord had to be fulfilled and Krishna did not appear in human form for a long time. . . . The Lord came and was incarnate in man. Then he returned with his disciples [16] to the Divine Mother."

Rakhal exclaimed, "Do not go away until we do!"

Ramakrishna smiled tenderly and said,

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[15] Naren's passionate soul found it more difficult than the others to suppress his revolt against the law of suffering. (Cf. his dialogue of April 22 with Hirananda.)

"The plan of this world is diabolical. I could have created a better world. Our only refuge is the faith that it is I who can do everything."

To which the gentle Hirananda replied,

"That is more easy to say than to realise." And he added piously,

"Thou (God) art everything. Not I, but Thou."

But the proud and headstrong Naren repeated,

"Thou art I and I am Thou. There is nothing else but I."

Ramakrishna listened in silence, smiling indulgently, and said pointing to Naren,

"He is moving about carrying as it were a naked sword in his hand."

[16] In Hindu belief each Avatara (Incarnation) is accompanied to earth by a train of elect souls, his disciples.

"A troop of Bauls[17] suddenly entered a house; they sang God's name and danced for joy. Then they left the house as suddenly as they had entered it—and the owners did not know who they were. . . ."

He sighed.

"Sometimes I pray that the Lord will grant that I should no more be sent into this world."

But he went on at once,

"He (God) reclothes Himself with the human form for love of those pure souls who love the Lord." And he looked at Naren with ineffable affection.

On the 9th of April Ramakrishna said, looking at the fan, which he was waving to and fro in the hot night,

"Just as I see this fan I am holding in front of me I have seen God. . . . And I see . . ."—he spoke quite low, laying his hand on Naren's and asked, "What did I say?"

Naren replied, "I did not hear distinctly."

Ramakrishna then indicated by signs that *He*, God, and his own self were one.

"Yes," said Naren, "I am He."

"Only a line intervenes—for the enjoyment of bliss," and the Master.

"But," said the disciple, "the great remain in the world even after they have realised their liberation. They keep their own ego and its sufferings so that they may fulfil the salvation of humanity."

There was absolute silence and then the Master spoke again,

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[17] A Hindu sect, intoxicated with God, who have renounced the world.

"The roof[18] is within a man's sight, but it is very difficult to reach it . . . but he who has reached it can let down a rope and pull others up to him upon the roof."

This was one of the days when he realised in full the identity of all within the One Being; when he saw that "all three were the same substance—the victim, the block and the executioner," and he cried in a feeble voice, "My God, what a vision!" He fainted with emotion, but when he came to himself he said, "I am well. I have never been so well." [19] Those who know how terrible was the disease from which he died (cancer of the throat) marvelled at the loving and kindly smile that never left him. If the glorious death upon the Cross was denied to this man, who is the Christ to his Indian followers, his bed of agony was no less a Cross.[20] And yet he could say,

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[18] The metaphor of the roof is often used in Ramakrishna's sayings.

"Divine Incarnations can always achieve knowledge of the Absolute in Samadhi. At the same time they can come down from the heights into human guise so that they love the Lord as father or mother, etc. . . . When they say, 'Not this! Not this!' they leave the steps behind them one after the other until they reach the roof. And then they say, 'This is it!' But soon they discover that the steps are made of the same materials, of bricks and mortar as the roof. Then they can ascend and descend resting sometimes on the roof, sometimes on the steps of the staircase. The roof represents the Absolute, the steps the world of phenomena."

(*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* I, 324.)

[19] Ramakrishnananda, the disciple who nursed him, said, "He never lost his cheerfulness. He always said he was well and happy." (From his unpublished Memoirs.)

[20] The Swami Ashokananda has written to me that the photograph taken of Ramakrishna directly after his death and of which there is a copy in the Madras monastery, cannot be reproduced, so terribly was the body wasted and ravaged by the disease. The sight is unbearable.

"Only the body suffers. When the spirit is united to God, it can feel no pain."

And again,

"Let the body and its sufferings occupy themselves with each other. Thou, my spirit, remain in bliss. Now I and my Divine Mother are one for ever." [21]

Three or four days before his death he called Naren and asked to be left alone with him. He looked lovingly upon him and passed into an ecstasy. It enveloped Naren in its folds. When he came back from the shadows, he saw Ramakrishna in tears. The Master said to him,

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[21] Two days before his death in answer to Naren's unspoken desire to drag from him the avowal he was so loth to make, Ramakrishna said,

"He who was Rama and who was Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body lying here:"

But he added,

"Not in your Vedantic sense." (That is to say, not merely in the sense of identity with the Absolute, but in the sense of Incarnation.)

I am naturally not going to discuss the Hindu belief in the Avataras. Beliefs cannot be discussed and this one is of the same order as the Christian belief in the God-man. But what I want to remove from the mind of the Western reader is the idea that there was any feeling of monstrous pride on the part of those who believed that within them was the presence of God, like the simple Ramakrishna. At other times as when a faithful follower (in 1884) said to him, "When I see you I see God," he rebuked him. "Never say that. The wave is part of the Ganges, the Ganges is not part of the wave." (*Gospel,* II, 181.) Cf. "The Avataras are to Brahman what the waves are to the Ocean." (From *Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings,* p. 362.) Ramakrishna considered that he was the habitation of God, who played within him hidden beneath the veil of his corruptible body. "A Divine Incarnation is hard to comprehend—it is the play of the Infinite on the finite." (*ibid.,* 369.) Only whereas the Divine Visitor in most men, even "in the saints manifests Himself only in part like honey in a flower . . . you suck the flower and get a little honey . . . in the Incarnation it is all honey." (*ibid.,* 367.) It is all one, for "the Avatar is always one and the same, appearing now here, now there, under different faces and names—Krishna, Christ, etc. . . ." (*ibid.,* 357.) And the name of Christ ought to remind us of another moral aspect, which is always part of an Incarnation. The words "flower," "honey," "joy" should not lead us astray. There is always the element of Divine sacrifice, as in the case of Christ, when God becomes incarnate. (*ibid.,* 358.)

"To-day I have given you my all and am now only a poor fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense good in the world and not until it is accomplished will you return." [22]

From that moment all his powers were transferred to Naren. The Master and the disciples were one.

Sunday, August 15, 1886. . . . The last day.

In the afternoon he still had the almost miraculous energy to talk for two hours to his disciples [23] in spite of his martyred throat. At nightfall he became unconscious. They believed him to be dead, but towards midnight he revived. Leaning against five or six pillows supported by the body of the humble disciple, Ramakrishnananda, he talked up to the last moment with Naren, the beloved disciple, and gave him his last counsel in a low voice. Then in ringing tones he cried three times the name of his life's Beloved, Kali, the Divine Mother, and lay back. The final ecstasy began. He remained in it until half an hour before

[22] "To the Absolute" is to be understood.

[23] On the subject of Yoga.

[24] According to the witness of Sarkar. Cf. the unpublished Memoirs of Ramakrishnananda.

"On that last night Ramakrishna was talking with us to the very last. . . . He was sitting up against five or six pillows, which were supported by my body, and at the same time I was fanning (him). . . . Narendra took his feet and began to rub them and Ramakrishna was talking to him, telling him what he must do. 'Take care of these boys,' he repeated again and again. . . . Then noon, when he died.[24] In his own words of faith, "He had passed from one room to the other."

And his disciples cried,
"Victory!" [25]

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he asked to lie down. Suddenly at one o'clock he fell towards one side, there was a low sound in his throat. . . . Narendra quickly laid his feet on the quilt and ran downstairs as if he could not bear it. A doctor . . . who was feeling his pulse saw that it had stopped. . . . We all believed that it was only Samadhi."

I have also consulted the manuscript copy of Sister Devamata: *Sri Ramakrishna and his Disciples,* and the Memoirs of Sarada Devi, Ramakrishna's wife.

[25] Literally, "Victory to Baghavan Ramakrishna," as they carried him to the place of cremation, where his body was burned the same evening.

EPILOGUE

The man himself was no more. His spirit had departed to travel along the path of collective life in the veins of humanity.

The fellowship of apostles began at once; for the young disciples, the witnesses of his last months, found it impossible to return to the world. They were without resources. But four married disciples—Balaram Bose to whom Ramakrishna's relics were entrusted for the time being, Surendranath Mitra, Mohendranath Gupta and Girish Chandra Ghosh, the converted comedian, encouraged them and helped them to found a home. Surendranath Mitra contributed money for the rent of a half-ruined house at Baranagore near the Ganges. This became the first Math or monastery of disciples. A dozen or more gathered there under monastic cognomens which have hidden their real names from posterity. He who had been Naren, he who was and is for all time Vivekananda,[1] put himself at their head by common consent. He was the most energetic, the most vital, the most intelligent—and the Master himself had nominated him. The others were tempted to shut themselves up in solitude and to allow themselves to be buried beneath an intoxicating stupor of memory and of grief; but the great disciple who knew better than they, all the fascination but at the same time the danger of such a course, devoted himself to their instruction. He was like a tornado of fire in the midst of these hermits; he roused them from their sorrow and ecstasy; he forced them to learn the thoughts of the outside world; he flooded them with the refreshing rain of his vast intellect; he made them taste of all the branches of the tree of knowledge—comparative religion, science, history, sociology; for he wished them to gain a universal perspective; he led them to fruitful discussion without ceasing for a single instant to maintain the sacred fire.

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[1] This was the name he adopted several years later. In Part Two I shall trace its origin.

It was at the symbolic season of Christmas 1886 that the act giving birth to the Men of God was signed and sealed. The story is an arresting one, for it contains the thrill of an unforeseen encounter in the night between the "Beau Dieu" [2] of the West and the Word of India.

They were assembled at Antpur in the house of the mother of one of the disciples (Baburam).

"It was late in the evening when the monks gathered together before the fire. Huge logs of wood were brought by them and ignited; and soon a raging flame burned upwards, making the darkness beautiful by contrast. And overhead was the canopy of the Indian night, and all around was the ineffable peace of the rural stillness. Meditation began continuing for a long time. Then a break was made and the Leader (Vivekananda) filled the silence with the story of the Lord Jesus.[3] From the very beginning, from the wondrous mystery of birth it commenced. The monks were raised into beatitude with the Virgin Mary when the Saviour's coming was announced to her. . . . The monks lived with Jesus during the days of His childhood; they were with Him in the Flight into Egypt. They were with Him in the Temple surrounded by the Jewish Pandits hearing and answering their questions. They were with Him at the time when He gathered His first disciples, and they adored Him as they adored their own Master.[4] The many points of similarity in thought and action as well as the relationship with the disciples, between Christ and Ramakrishna, forcibly brought to their minds the old days of ecstasy with their Master. The words of Christ the Redeemer rang upon their ears as familiar sayings."

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[2] The literal meaning is "beautiful God." So the French people call a celebrated statue of Christ on the portal of the Gothic cathedral of Amiens.

[3] Vivekananda had a passionate regard for Christ, whose divinity Ramarkrishna, as we have seen, had acknowledged.

And the story of the Passion, of the Crucifixion, threw them into the depths of meditation. Through Naren's eloquence they had been admitted to the apostolic circle where Paul preached the Gospel. The fire of Pentecost consumed their souls in the peace of the Bengal village; and the mingled names of Christ and of Ramakrishna stole upon the night air.

Then Vivekananda appealed to the monks. He besought them to become Christs in their turn, to work for the redemption of the world, to renounce all as Jesus had done and to realise God. Standing before the wood fire, their faces reddened by the leaping flames, the crackling of the logs the only sound that broke the stillness of their thoughts, they solemnly took the vows of everlasting Sannyasa, each before his fellows and all in the sight of God.

And it was not until that moment when all had been accomplished that the monks remembered that that very night was Christmas Eve.[5]

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[4] Of two among them, Sasibhushan (Ramakrishnananda) and Saratchandra (Saradananda) Ramakrishna had said that they had been the disciples of Christ in a former life.

A beautiful symbol of profound significance heralding the Nativity of a new Day of God. . . .

But Europe must not be misled when she reads this story. This was no return to Jordan. Rather it was the confluence of the Jordan and the Ganges. The two united streams flowed together along their wider river bed.

From its very inception the new Order had in it something that was unique. Not only did it contain within itself the energy of faith both of the East and of the West, not only did it unite an encyclopædic study of the sciences and religious meditation, but in it the ideal of contemplation was wedded to the ideal of human service. From the first Ramakrishna's spiritual sons were not allowed to shut themselves up within the walls of a monastery. One after the other they went out to wander through the world as mendicant monks. Only one, Ramakrishnananda (Sasibhushan), the guardian of the relics, remained in the dovecote whither the birds of passage returned from time to time for rest. During the last months of the Master's life the humble ideal of Martha had been adopted—*Dienen* . . . *Dienen*—to serve (the word of Parsifal). They practised it in their service for the suffering Master, in the service of the bodies of those whose spirit was engrossed in the service of God, and in service to the praying brethren. This was the Master's own way of "realisation," and the aged Tolstoy would have said that he had chosen the better part.

But each had his own part to play, for each unconsciously through the very bent of his nature represented one phase or one aspect of the multiform personality of Ramakrishna. When they were assembled together he was there in his entirety.

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[5] The Life of the Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II.

Their mighty spokesman, Vivekananda, on behalf of them all was to spread throughout the world the World of him, who, he claimed, was the living synthesis of all the spiritual forces of India.

"I . . . had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one, . . . whose life, a thousand-fold more than whose teaching was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact the spirit of the Upanishads living in human form . . . the harmony of all the diverse thought of India. . . .[6] India has been rich in thinkers and sages. . . . The one had a great head (Sankara) the other a large heart (Ramanuja) and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart . . . who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderfully expansive infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects . . . and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence; such a man was born. . . . The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came; and the most wonderful part of it was, that his life's work was just near a city which was full of Western thought, a city which had run mad after these occidental ideas, a city which had become more Europeanised than any other city in India. There he lived without any book-learning whatever; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name, but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant[7] . . . the sage for the time, one whose teaching is just now, in the present time most beneficial. . . . If I have told you one word of truth it was his and his alone, and if I have told you many things which were not correct . . . they were all mine, and on me is the responsibility."

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[6] Speeches at Calcutta and Madras: The Vadanta in All its Phases, and The Sages of India.

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[7] The greatest philosophical and religious mind of the India of today, Aurobindo Ghose, a man unattached to any particular school of thought, has paid a brilliant tribute to Ramakrishna's genius, throwing into prominence the exceptional multiplicity of his spiritual powers and the still more exceptional soul directing them:

"In a recent and unique example, in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge. Such an example cannot be generalised. Its object also was special and temporal, to exemplify in the great and decisive experience of a master soul the truth, now most necessary to humanity, towards which a world long divided into jarring sects and schools is with difficulty labouring, that all sects are forms and fragments of a single integral truth and all disciplines labour in their different ways towards one supreme experience. To know, be and possess the divine is the one thing needful and it includes or leads up to all the rest . . . all the rest that the divine Will chooses for us, all necessary form and manifestation, will be added."

(The Synthesis of Yoga, Arya Review, Pondicherry, No. 5, December 15, 1914.)

In this way the essential significance of the personality and life of Ramakrishna has been realised by the master metaphysician of India today.

Thus at the feet of the simple Ramakrishna the most intellectual, the most imperious, the most justifiably proud of all the great religious spirits of modern India humbled himself. He was the St. Paul of this Messiah of Bengal. He founded his Church and his doctrine. He travelled throughout the world and was the aqueduct, akin to those red arches that span the Roman Campagna, along which the waters of the spirit have flowed from India to Europe[8] and from Europe back to India, joining scientific reason to Vedantic faith and the past to the future.

It is this Journey of the soul that I intend to trace in a succeeding volume. In this present one I have led European thought to the distant countries of religious mythology, whose wide-spreading tree, the giant banyan, too often considered by the West to be dried up and withered, continues to shoot out great flowering branches. I shall then lead it back by unsuspected paths to its home where modern reason sits enthroned. And it will discover at the end of the journey that between one country and another the gulf of centuries dividing them is, when subjected to the "wireless" of free understanding, no wider than a hair's breadth and the space of a second.

R. R.
Christmas, 1928.

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[8] Mother Europe and her brood of the Americas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The chief source for the history of Ramakrishna is the great Biography, compiled from the accounts of his disciples and published by the Swani Madhavananda:

Life of Sri Ramakrishna, compiled from various authentic sources,—one volume of 765 pages in the edition of the Advaita Ashrama (the intellectual centre of the Order), Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1925. (Himalayan Series, No. XLVII).

It is prefaced with a short introduction by Gandhi, which I feel it is of interest to reproduce:

"The story of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life is a story of religion in practise. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. His sayings are not those of a mere learned man, but they are pages from the Book of Life. They are revelations of his own experience. They therefore leave on the reader an impression which he cannot resist. In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and loving faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light. Ramakrishna's life was an object lesson in Ahimsa. His love knew no limits geographical or otherwise. May his divine love be an inspiration to all who read the following pages."

M. K. GANDHI.

Sabarmati,
Margsheersh, Krishna I,
Vikram Samvati 1891.

As is shown by an editorial note this work is based on the labours of Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of the Master and the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission for more than a quarter of a century; on those of Ramchandra Dutt and of Akshay Kumar Sen, both of them disciples of Ramakrishna; on memories collected by Priyanath Sinha (alias Gurudas Varman), a disciple of Vivekananda; on the Discourses of the Master taken down by Mahendra Nath Gupta.

This compilation is valuable because of the religious care which has been taken to collect in it literally all the documents at first hand, which had been scattered abroad. But it is inconvenient because they are presented without any arrangement and without criticism. And the lack (up to the present) of an alphabetical index makes research into it very difficult.

2. Of much greater value from the point of view of arrangement and reason is the work of Swami Saradananda. It consists of five volumes written in Bengali, which, however, do not give a consecutive and full account of the life. The story, unfortunately interrupted by the death of Saradananda in 1927 stops short at the point when Ramakrishna during his last illness was moved to the gardens of Cossipore, and therefore the last months are missing. The work is also incomplete with regard to Ramakrishna's disciples, with one or two exceptions, the most noteworthy being Vivekananda.

The title of the series in Bengali is:

Sri Ramakrishna-lila-prasanga. (Discourse on the *lila* (the play) of Ramakrishna).

The titles of the 5 volumes in Bengali are as follows:

I and II. *Gurubhave* (Sri Ramakrishna as Guru or master).
III. *Valya-jivana* (the youth of Ramakrishna).
IV. *Sadhakabhava* (Ramakrishna as Sadhaka).

V. *Divyabhava* (Ramakrishna in his divine form).

Only two volumes have appeared in English; the first written by Saradananda himself; the second translated from the original Bengali.

Some of the other chapters from the Bengali work have been published in the Reviews of the Ramakrishna Order, *Prabuddha Bharata* (in particular the relations of Ramakrishna with Vivekananda), and in another English magazine.

Saradananda planned this work in the form of an exposition of the various aspects of his life without presenting it in the form of a consecutive narrative. The first two volumes in Bengali were written according to this plan. Then Saradananda changed it to the form of an ordinary biography. The third volume is devoted to the youth, the fourth to the years when Ramakrishna was practising his Sadhana; it takes us to the end of this exercise and to the first relations with the Brahmo Samaj, where the part played by Ramakrishna as a teacher (but not yet as a religious manifestation) is brought out. The fifth volume describes the Master in the midst of his disciples and the beginning of his illness. At this point he saw the death of the "Holy Mother" (Ramakrishna's wife), and then that of Swami Brahmananda, who with Vivekananda, had been the favourite disciple and the first Abbot of the Order. He was so overwhelmed with grief that he abandoned his written work and gave himself up wholly to meditation.

Incomplete though the work remains, it is excellent for the subject. Saradananda is an authority both as a philosopher and as an historian. His books are rich in metaphysical sketches, which place the spiritual appearance of Ramakrishna exactly in its place in the rich procession of Hindu thought.

If variations appear between the Bengali work of

Saradananda and the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (No. 1), which is the collective work of the Ramakrishna Order, the latter must be given the preference (according to the evidence I have received from Swami Ashokananda), for it was drawn up with Saradananda's help after his own work.

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (according to M., a son of the Lord and disciple), or the Ideal Man for India and the World,* 2 volumes, Madras, published by the Ramakrishna Math, 1897, (preceded by two approving letters of Vivekananda), 2nd Edition, 1911. New Editions in 1922-1924).[1]

   This Gospel of Ramakrishna is as valuable as the great Biography (No. 1), for it is the faithful account of M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta, the head of an educational establishment at Calcutta) of the Discourses with the Master, either his own or those which he actually heard from the summer of 1882 for the next four years. Their exactitude is almost stenographic. A good alphabetical index makes it possible to find one's way among the diversity of subjects treated in the course of the days.

4. *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda, by his Eastern and Western Disciples,* the Advaita Ashrama, Himalayas, the semi-centenary birthday memorial edition, in three volumes,[2] published by the Swami Virajananda from the Prabuddha Bharata Office, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas; columes I and II, 1914; volume III, 1915; volume IV, 1918.

   This great life of Ramakrishna's chief disciple has not only a capital interest for its own history, but for that of his Master, since it embodies his own direct memories.

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[1] To my great regret the only two volumes of the *Gospel,* which I could procure were of two different editions: the first volume belonged to the 4th edition of 1924, the second volume to the first of 1922. But it may be presumed that in so short an interval the arrangement and style differed but little.

[2] In reality there are four and not three volumes in this publication.

It is also useful to consult the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* in 7 volumes. He often speaks of his Master with pious gratitude. He dedicated to him in particular a celebrated lecture in New York published under the title: *My Master,* in volume IV of the *Complete Works.*

5. *Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings,* 2 small volumes, 1916 and 1920, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.

   These are a collection of thoughts delivered during the various Discourses of the Master, in particular in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* and arranged in methodical order. It is especially valuable as a little practical volume. It appeared piecemeal in the Review of the Order, the Prabuddha Bharata, and in other Indian Reviews between 1900 and 1913. A German edition is at the moment being prepared.

6. *Words of the Master (Selected Precepts of Sri Ramakrishna),* compiled by Swami Bramhananda, 1924, Udbodhan Office, Baghbazar, Calcutta.

   Another small anthology, chiefly interesting on account of the personality of the anthologist.

7. *Ramakrishna, his Life and Sayings,* by Max Müller, Longmans, Green and Co. 1st edition, 1898, new edition, 1923.

   Max Müller knew Vivekananda personally in England; and he asked him to give him a complete account of the life of his Master. His small work is therefore based on first hand evidence; and he uses it with his broad and clear critical spirit, in which are allied the scientific exegesis of the West and a generous understanding of all forms of thought.

8. *The Face of Silence,* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji, New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., 1926.

   This work, which is of exceptional value as a work of art, is a brilliant evocation of the figure of the

Master in the atmosphere of the India of his time. Mukerji has consulted all the principal documents. He has also interviewed several of the eminent personalities of the Ramakrishna Mission, who knew the Master, in particular Swami Turiyananda, and he has used the Memoirs of Swami Premananda, one of Ramakrishna's dearest disciples. The Ramakrishna Mission has not taken in very good part the liberties due at times to the lively imagination of the artist in the reported words; and it has issued a warning against some of its "theological" interpretations, whose character seem of too personal a nature. For my own part I can never forget that it is to the perusal of this beautiful book that I owe my first knowledge of Ramakrishna and the impetus leading me to undertake this work. I here record my gratitude. With extraordinary talent and tact Mukerji in this book has chosen and put in the limelight those features in Ramakrishna's personality which will most attract the spirit of Europe and America without shocking it. I have felt it necessary to go beyond his precautions and to cite documents exactly without allowing myself to "embroider" them.

9. It is useful to consult the Reviews of the Ramakrishna Order, which have published and still continue to publish studies and unpublished memories of the Master and his disciples—chiefly Prabudha Bharata and The Vedanta Kesari.

I said at the outset how much I owe to the good counsels and the information of the Ramakrishna Mission, which has tirelessly put at my disposal its documents and replied to my questions. I can only repeat my thanks.

R. R.

ICONOGRAPHY

There are only three pictures of Ramakrishna which appear to be authentic:

1. One published in the great Biography in English, published by the Advaita Ashrama, (p. 262). Ramakrishna was taken to a photographer and involved in a spiritual conversation in the course of which he fell into the Samadhi. A photograph was then taken and when Ramakrishna saw it afterwards he made the remark that it represented an exalted condition of *yoga.*
2. One published in Vol. IV of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* p. 150.
3. One which I hope to publish sent to me by Swami Ashokananda. It was taken during a Kirtan (religious dances and songs) in which he was taking part with ecstatic joy.

The portrait in colours reproduced as the frontispiece of the big Biography was painted by an Austrian artist, but not from the living model. The disciples considered that it was very like him except that it was too highly coloured.

NOTE I

SARADADEVI AND THE BRIGANDS

In order to join her husband Saradadevi had often to cross the plain between Kamarpukur and Dakshineswar on foot, and at that time it was infested with bands of brigands, worshippers of Kali.

One day she was returning to Dakshineswar in the company of several others. She was so tired when night fell that she could not keep up with the rest of the little band and dropped behind. Soon they were lost to view and she found herself alone in complete darkness at the beginning of the dangerous plain. At that moment she saw a swarthy man coming towards her. He was big and strong and carried a club on his shoulder; he was followed by another figure. She saw that there was no possibility of escape and remained motionless. The man came up to her and said in a rough voice,

"What are you doing here at this time of night?"

She answered him,

"Father, my companions left me behind and I have lost myself. Will you be so kind as to take me to them? Your son-in-law dwells in the temple of Kali at Dakshineswar. I am going to him. If you will take me as far as that, he will be most grateful to you."

At that moment the other figure came up. Saradadevi realised with relief that it was the man's wife. She took her by the hand and said,

"Mother, I am your daughter Sarada. I am lost here and all alone. My companions have deserted me. Fortunately you and my father turned up! Otherwise I do not know what I should have done."

Her simple ways, her absolute trust, and her sweet words touched the hearts of the man and woman. They belonged to the lowest caste; but they forgot everything and treated Sarada as their daughter. She was tired. They would not allow her to continue her journey; they made her sleep at a shop in the neighbouring village. The woman took off her own clothes in order to make a bed for her. The man brought her some puffed rice that he had bought at the shop. They watched over her as if they had been indeed her parents all night, and in the morning they took her as far as Tarakeswar, where they begged her to rest. The woman said to her husband,

"My daughter did not have much to eat yesterday. Go and fetch some fish and vegetables for her from the bazaar. She must have better food today."

While the man had gone to fetch them, Sarada's companions came back to look for her. She introduced her Bagdi [1] parents to them, and said,

"I do not know what I should have done, if they had not come to the rescue."

"When we separated," so she told afterwards, "this single night had made us so dear to one another that I wept for grief when I said goodbye to them. I made them promise to come to Dakshineswar to see me. They followed us for some time. The woman picked a few green peas growing at the side of the road and wrapped them in a fold of my sari, and said, 'Mother Sarada, tonight when you eat your puffed rice take these with it.' . . . . They came to see me several times at Dakshineswar and brought me different presents. 'He' [2] behaved towards them as if he were their son-in-law, and treated them with great affection and respect. . . . But although my Dacoit[3] father was so good and simple, I suspect that he had more than once committed acts of brigandage. . . ."

Adapted from *The Modern Review,* June 1927.

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[1] A low caste.

[2] "He," that is to say, "my husband." An orthodox Hindu wife must never name her husband.

[3] Indian term for a brigand.

PROPHETS OF THE NEW INDIA

BOOK II

BOOK TWO

PRELUDE

THE great disciple whose task it was to take up the spiritual heritage of Ramakrishna and disseminate the grain of his thought throughout the world, was both physically and morally his direct antithesis.

The Seraphic Master had spent his whole life at the feet of the Divine Beloved, the Mother—the Living God. He had been dedicated to Her from infancy; before he had attained self-consciousness he had the consciousness that he loved Her. And although, in order to rejoin her he had been condemned to years of torment, that was after the manner of a knight errant the sole object of whose trials was to make him worthy of the object of his chaste and religious love. She alone was at the end of all the interlacing paths in the forest. She alone, the multiple God, among the thousands of Faces. And when he had reached her, he found that he had learned to recognize all those other faces, and to love them in Her, so that with Her he embraced the whole world. The rest of his life had been spent in the serene fullness of this cosmic Joy, whose revelation Beethoven and Schiller have sung for the West.[1]

But he realised it more fully than our tragic heroes. Joy appeared to Beethoven only as a gleam of blue through the chaos of conflicting clouds, while the Paramahamsa—the Indian swan—rested his great white wing on the sapphire lake of eternity beyond the veil of tumultuous days.

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[1] Reference to Beethoven's IXth. (Choral) Symphony, which ends with a setting of Schiller's Ode to Joy (Translator's Note).

It was not given to his proudest disciples to emulate him. The greatest of them, the spirit with the widest wings—Vivekananda—could only attain his heights by sudden flights amid tempests which remind me over and over again of Beethoven. Even in moments of rest upon its bosom the sails of his ship were filled with every wind that blew. Earthly cries, the suffering of the age, fluttered round him like a flight of famished gulls. The passions of strength (never of weakness) were striving within his lion's heart. He was energy personified, and action was his message to men. For him as for Beethoven it was the root of all the virtues. He went so far in his aversion to passivity, whose secular yoke weighs so heavily on the patient bovine brow of the East, as to say:

"Above all, be strong! Be manly! I have a respect even for one who is wicked, so long as he is manly and strong; for his strength will make him some day give up his wickedness, or even give up all works for selfish ends, and will thus eventually bring him into the Truth."[2]

His athletic form was the opposite of the fragile and tender, yet wiry, body of Ramakrishna. He was tall (five feet, eight and a half inches),[3] square shouldered, broad chested, stout, rather heavily built; his arms were muscular and trained to all kinds of sports. He had an olive complexion, a full face, vast forehead, strong jaw,[4] a pair of magnificent eyes, large, dark and rather prominent with heavy lids, whose shape recalled the classic comparison to a lotus leaf. Nothing escaped the magic of his glance, capable equally of embracing in its irresistible charm or of sparkling with wit, irony, or kindness, of losing itself in ecstasy, or of plunging imperiously to the very depths of consciousness and of withering with its fury. But his pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty.

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[2] 1891. To his Alwar disciples in Rajputana.

[3] He weighed 170 pounds. In the *Phrenological Journal of New York* (reproduced in Volume II of the Life of Vivekananda) the exact measurements may be found that were taken at the time of his first journeys in America.

[4] His jaw was more Tartar than Hindu. Vivekananda boasted of his Tartar ancestors, and he loved to say that in India "the Tartar is the wine of the race."

When this quite unknown young man of twenty-nine, appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions, opened in September 1893 by Cardinal Gibbons, all his fellow members were forgotten in his commanding presence. His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep [5] voice enthralled the vast audience of American Anglo-Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour. The thought of this warrior-prophet [6] of India left a deep mark upon the United States.[7]

It was impossible to imagine him in the second place. Wherever he went he was the first. Even his master Ramakrishna in a vision which I have related, represented himself with regard to his beloved disciple, as a child beside a great Rishi. It was in vain that Vivekananda refused to accept such homage, judging himself severely and humiliating himself,—everybody at sight recognised in him the leader, the anointed of God, the man marked with the stamp of the power to command. A traveller who crossed his path without knowing who he was in the Himalayas, stopped in amazement and cried, "Shiva. . . ."

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[5] He had a beautiful voice like a violoncello (so Miss Josephine MacLeod told me) grave without violent contrasts but with deep vibrations that filled both hall and hearts. Once his audience was held he could make it sink to an intense *piano* piercing his hearers to the soul. Emma Calvé, who knew him, described it as "an admirable baritone, having the vibrations of a Chinese gong."

[6] He belonged to the Kayastha class, a sub-caste of warriors.

[7] *The Ramakrishna Mission,* after its introduction by him spread rapidly, and he found among Americans several of his most devoted disciples.

It was as if his chosen God had imprinted His name upon his forehead.

But this same forehead was weather-beaten like a crag by the four winds of the spirit. He very rarely realised the calm air, the limpid spaces of thought, whereon Ramakrishna's smile hovered. His superpowerful body,[8] and too vast brain were the predestined battle field for all the shocks of his storm-tossed soul. The present and the past, the East and the West, dream and action, struggled for supremacy. He knew and could achieve too much to be able to establish harmony by renouncing one part of his nature, or one part of truth. The synthesis of his great opposing forces took years of struggle, consuming his courage and his very life. Battle and life for him were synonymous.[9] And his days were numbered. Sixteen years passed between Ramakrishna's death and that of his great disciple . . . years of conflagration . . . He was less than forty years of age when the athlete lay stretched upon the pyre. . . .

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[8] Although marked very early by the first attacks of diabetes, the poison from which he died. This Hercules had death always sitting by his side.

[9] Did he not define life:—"The tendency of the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down."

(April 1891: Interview with the Maharajah of Khetri.)

But the flame of that pyre is still alight to-day. From his ashes, like those of the Phoenix of old, has been reborn the self consciousness of India faith in Unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of an ancient people—the message for which they must render account to the rest of mankind.

PART I

THE LIFE OF VIVEKANANDA

"Never forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God. . . . Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless Ocean which *I am.*"

(Vivekananda in America, 1896.)

I

THE PARIVRAJAKA. THE CALL OF THE EARTH TO THE WANDERING SOUL

After Christmas night 1886, described in my preceding volume—the mystic vigil of Baranagore, where the New Communion of Apostles was founded amid tears of love in memory of the lost Master—many months and years elapsed before the work was begun that translated Ramakrishna's thought into living action.

There was the bridge to be built and they could not at first make up their minds to build it. The only one with the necessary energy and constructive genius, Naren[1] himself hesitated. He, even more uncertain

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[1] I would remind the reader that his real name was Narendranath Dutt. He did not adopt the name of Vivekananda until the moment of his departure for America in 1893.

I have consulted the Ramakrishna Mission on this subject. Swami Ashokananda has been good enough to put at my disposal all the results of a profound research. According to the decisive witness of one of Vivekananda's most important monastic disciples, the Swami Suddhananda, the present Secretary of the R.M., Ramakrishna always used his name Narendra, or more shortly, Naren. Although he had made Sannyasins of certain of his disciples it was never according to the usual forms and he never gave them monastic names. He had indeed given Naren the cognomen of *Kamalaksha* (lotus eyed); but Naren dropped it immediately. During his first journeys in India he appeared under different names, in order to conceal his identity. Sometimes he was the Swami Vividishananda, sometimes Satchidananda. Again on the eve of his departure for America, when he went to ask Colonel Olcutt, then President of the Theosophical Society, for letters of introduction to America, it was under the name of Satchinananda than them all, was torn between dream and action. Before he raised the arch which was to span the two banks, it was necessary for him to know and to explore the *other bank*: the real world of India and the present day. But nothing as yet was clear: his coming mission burnt dimly in the feverish heart of this young man of destiny whose years only numbered twenty-three. The task was so heavy, so vast, so complex! How could it be accomplished even in spirit? And when and where was it to be begun? In anguish he put off the decisive moment. But was he able to prevent its impassioned discussion in the secret depths of his mind? It pursued him, every night from his adolescence,—not consciously but subconsciously through the ardent and conflicting instincts of his nature with all its conflicting desires—the Desire to have, to conquer, to dominate the earth, the Desire to renounce all earthly things in order to possess God.

The struggle was constantly renewed throughout his life. This warrior and conqueror wanted to have everything, both God and the world—to dominate everything—to renounce everything. The superfluity of powers striving within his Roman athlete body and Imperator brain contended for mastery. But this very excess of force made it impossible for him to confine his torrential waters within any bed save that of the river of

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that Colonel Olcutt knew him, and—instead of recommending him to his friends in America, warned them against him. (Olcutt's letter to Sharmapala, in America, has been read by Suddhananda). It was his great friend, the Maharajah of Khetri, who suggested the name Vivekananda to him at the moment when he was stepping on board the boat to go to America. The choice of the name was inspired by an allusion to the "power of discrimination" possessed by the Swami. Naren accepted it, perhaps provisionally, but he could never have changed it even if he had wanted to: for within a few months the name had acquired an Indo-American celebrity.

God—and complete self surrender to the Unity. How was this contest between pride and imperious love, between his two great desires, rival and sovereign brothers, to be decided?

There was a third element, which Naren himself had not foreseen, but which the prophetic eye of Ramakrishna had discerned from afar. At a time when the others were showing anxiety or mistrust with regard to this young man, in whom such tumultuous forces were at work, the Master had declared:

"The day when Naren comes in contact with suffering and misery, the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion. His strong faith in himself will be an instrument to re-establish in discouraged souls the confidence and faith they have lost. And the freedom of his conduct, based on mighty self-mastery, will shine brightly in the eyes of others, as a manifestation of the true liberty of the Ego."[2]

This meeting with suffering and human misery—not only vague and general—but definite misery, misery close at hand, the misery of his people, the misery of India—was to be the flint upon the steel whence a spark would fly to set the whole soul on fire. And with this as its foundation stone, pride, ambition and love, faith, science and action, all his powers and all his desires were thrown into the mission of Human Service and united into one single flame: "A religion which will give us faith in ourselves, a national self-respect, and the power to feed and educate the poor and relieve the misery around us . . . If you want to find God, serve man!"[3]

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[2] That is to say, the one Divine Being. (Quoted from the work of Saradananda: *Divya Bhana.*)

[3] *The Life of Vivekananda,* Vol. II. Chapter LXXIII. Conversations before 1893.

N. B.—*The Life of Vivekananda* to which I shall constantly

But consciousness of his mission only came and took possession of him after years of direct experience, wherein he saw with his own eyes, and touched with his own hands the miserable and glorious body of humanity —his mother India in all her tragic nakedness.

We shall accompany him throughout the pilgrimage of his *Wanderjahre.*

The first months, the first year at Baranagore were devoted to the mutual edification of the disciples. As yet not one of them was prepared to preach to men. They desired to concentrate on the search for mystic realisation; and the delights of the inner life made them turn away their eyes from outside. Naren, who shared their longing for the Infinite, but who realised how dangerous for the passive soul was this elementary attraction, which acts like gravity on a falling stone—Naren with whom dream itself was action—would not allow them to be torpidly engulfed in meditation. He made this period of conventual seclusion a hive of laborious education, a High School of the spirit. The superiority of his genius and his knowledge had from the first given him a tacit but definite guidance over his companions, although many of them were older than he. Had not the last words of the Master when he took leave of them, been to Naren,

"Take care of these boys!" . . .[4]

Naren resolutely undertook the conduct of this young seminary, and did not permit it to indulge in the idle-

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refer in the course of this book, is the classic work in India in four volumes, published by the Advaita Ashram of Mayavati, under the title: The Life of the Swami Vivekananda, by his Eastern and Western Disciples. 1914-1918.

[4] *Memoirs of the Disciple Ramakrishnananda* of the last moments of Ramakrishna, recently published in *Messages from the East* in the United States. (See the last chapter of the preceding Volume.)

ness of God. He kept its members ever on the alert, he harried their minds without any pity; he read them the great books of human thought, he explained to them the evolution of the universal mind, he forced them to dry and impassioned discussion of all the great philosophical and religious problems, he led them indefatigably towards the wide horizons of boundless Truth, which surpass all the limits of schools and races, and embrace and unify all particular truths.[5]

This synthesis of spirit fulfilled the promise of Ramakrishna's message of love. The unseen Master presided over their meetings. They were able to place their intellectual labours at the service of his universal heart.

But it is not in the nature of the religious Indian, notwithstanding Europe's belief in Asiatic immobility, to remain, like a French bourgeois, shut up in one place. Even those who practise contemplation have in their blood the secular instinct of wandering through the universe without fixed abode, without ties, independent and strangers wherever they go. This tendency to become a wandering monk, known in Hindu religious life by the special name of *Parivrajaka,* soon spurred some of the brethren of Barangore. From the moment of union the whole group had never assembled in its entirety. Two of its chiefs, Yogananda and Latu, were not present at the Christmas consecration of 1886. Others followed Ramakrishna's widow to Brindaban. Others, like the young Saradananda, suddenly disappeared, without saying where they were going. Naren, in spite of his anxiety to maintain the ties uniting the brotherhood, was himself tormented with the same desire to escape. How could this migratory need of the soul, this longing to lose itself in the Ocean of the air, like a carrier pigeon that stifles beneath the roof of the dovecote, be reconciled to the necessary fixity of a naissant Order? It was arranged that a portion at least of the group should always remain at Baranagore, while the other brethren followed the "Call of the Forest." And one of them—one only—Sasi (Soshi) never quitted the hearth. He was the faithful guardian of the Math, the immobile axis, the coping stone of the dovecote, whereto the vagabond wings returned. . . .[6]

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[5] In this panorama of all the heroic and divine thoughts of humanity, we must again notice the place of honour which seems to have been given to Christ and the Gospels. These Hindu monks kept Good Friday, and they sang the Canticles of St. Francis. Naren, who could never read the immortal story of the Crucifixion without tears, spoke to them of the Christian saints, the founders of the Western Orders. *The Imitation of Jesus Christ* was their bedside book together with the Bhagavadgita. Nevertheless there was never for a moment any question of enrolling themselves within the Church of Christ. They were and remain complete and uncompromising Vedantic Advaitists. But they incorporate in their faith all the faiths of the world. The waters of Jordan mingle with their Ganges. If any westerner waxes indignant at the abuse he sees in this connection, we would ask him whether the mingling of the waters of the Tibur with the river of Palestine is any better.

Naren resisted the call to flight for two years. Apart from short visits he remained at Baranagore until 1888. Then he left suddenly, not at first alone, but with one companion, and intense though his desire to escape, for two and a half years he always returned if he was recalled by his brethren, or by some unforeseen event. Then he was seized by the sacred madness to escape; the longing suppressed for five years burst all bounds. In 1891, alone, without a companion, without a name, staff and bowl in hand as an unknown beggar, he was swallowed up for years in the immensity of India.

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[6] I have said above that Ramakrishna the free, differing in this respect from other Gurus, had not in the case of his disciples, carried out the ceremony of initiation in its usual forms. This was later a subject of reproach to Vivekananda. Naren and his companions supplemented it themselves about 1888 or 1889 by carrying it to the *Viraja Homa,* the traditional ceremony of Sannyasa at the monastery of Baranagore. Swami Ashokananda has also told me that another kind of Sannyasa is recognized in India, as superior to the formal Sannyasa consecrated in the usual way. He who feels a strong detachment from life and an intense thirst for God, can take the Sannyasa alone, even without any formal initiation. This was doubtless the case with the free monks of Baranagore.

But a hidden logic directed his distracted course. The immortal words: "Thou wouldest not have looked for Me if thou hadst not found Me"[7] are never so true as for those souls possessed by the hidden God, who struggle with Him in order to drag from Him the secret of the mission with which they are charged.

Naren had no doubt that a mission awaited him; his power, his genius spoke within him, and the fever of the age, the misery of the time, and the mute appeal rising all around him from oppressed India, the tragic contrast between the august grandeur of her ancient might of her unfulfilled destiny, and the degradation of the country betrayed by her children, the anguish of death and resurrection, of despair and love, devoured his heart. But what was his mission to be? Who was to dictate it to him? The holy Master was dead, without having defined it for him. And among the living, was any[8] capable of enlightening his path? God alone.

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[7] Pascal.

[8] There was only one:—a holy man, revered by the wisest in India, Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur. This great hermit, born of Brahmin parents at Benares, and very learned, knowing all Indian religions, and philosophies, the Dravidian languages and ancient Bengali, who had travelled in all countries, had retired into solitude and practised the strictest asceticism. The tranquillity of his intrepid soul, his heroic humility, which had taught itself to look the most terrible realities in the face with a calm smile, and which made him say in the midst of cruel sufferings caused by the bite of a cobra that "it was a message from his Beloved"—fascinated the highest spirits of India. He had been visited by Keshab Chundar Sen; and even during the life of Ramakrishna, Vivekan-

Let Him then speak. Why was he silent? Why did he refuse to answer?

Naren went to find Him.

He suddenly left Calcutta in 1888 and went through Benares, Dayodia, Lucknow, Agra, Brindaban, Northern India and the Himalayas. Nothing is known of this journey or of the subsequent ones—Naren kept the secret of his religious experiences—except from the Memoirs of the Brethren who met him or accompanied him.[9] In 1888 during the first of these pilgrimages after he had left Brindaban at Hatras, a small railway station, he quite unintentionally made his first disciple—a man one minute a complete stranger, the next impelled by the attraction of his glance to leave all and follow him, and who remained faithful unto death: Sarat Chendra Gupta (who took the name of Sadananda).[10]

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anda had been to him (Pavhari recognised Ramakrishna's sanctity.) Naren saw him again during the period of uncertainty following Ramakrishna's death; he visited him daily, and was on the verge of becoming his follower, and demanding initiation of him. This torment of soul lasted several weeks; he was torn between the mystic appeals of Ramakrishna and of Pavhari Baba. The latter would have satisfied his passion for the Divine gulf, wherein the individual soul renounces itself, and is entirely absorbed with no thought of return. And he would have appeased the remorse, always gnawing at Naren's heart, for turning from the world and social service: for he professed the faith that the spirit can help others, even without the help of the body, and that the most intense action is that of the most intense concentration. What religious spirit has not heard this voice with its deadly attraction? Naren was for twenty-one days within an ace of yielding. But for twenty-one nights the vision of Ramakrishna came to draw him back. Finally after an inner struggle of the utmost intensity, whose vicissitudes he has constantly refused to reveal, he made his choice for ever. He chose the service of God in man.

[9] Saradananda, Brahmananda, Premananda, Yogananda, Yuriyananda,—especially Akhandananda, who was with him the longest.

[10] In her unpublished *Memoirs*, which have been shown to me, Sister Christine, Vivekananda's great American disciple, has left a

They went about in the guise of beggars, often repulsed, at times almost dying of hunger and thirst, with no regard for caste and willing to smoke even the pipe of the pariah. Sadananda fell ill, and Naren carried him on his shoulders through dangerous jungles. Then he in turn fell ill and they were obliged to return to Calcutta.

This very first journey had brought ancient India vividly before his eyes, eternal India, the India of the Vedas, with its race of heroes and gods, clothed in the glory of legend and history, Aryans, Moghuls and

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precious account of this episode and the attractive personality of Sadananda, gleaned from Vivekananda's confidences to her.

Sadananda was the young station master of Hatras. He saw Naren arrive at the station dying of hunger. He was captivated by his glance. "I followed two diabolical eyes," he said later. He made him come into his house; and when his guest departed he followed him—for life.

Both young men were artists and poets. But, unlike his Master, with Sadananda the intellect held a secondary place, although he was well educated—(he had studied Persian and been influenced by Sufism). Like him he had a very vivid sense of beauty and enjoyed the delights of Nature and of the countryside. None remained more devoted to Vivekananda. He was impregnated with the being of the Master; he had only to close his eyes, to meditate on his features and gestures to be immediately filled with the profundities of his thought. Vivekananda described him as "the child of my spirit." Without having known Ramakrishna, he was by nature nearer to him than any of the others; and episodes in his life recall that of the Paramahamsa—as well as of several of our saints of the Golden Legend:—he saw a buffalo being beaten: immediately the marks of the whip appeared upon his body; he cared for the lepers, worshipping them as God; for the whole of one night he held a man burning with smallpox against his body to refresh his fever. More than any other of the future disciples he had the democratic spirit (due partly, according to Sister Christine, to Mohammedan influence). He was one of the first of the Mission to organise a corps of scavengers during the plague. He loved the Untouchables and shared their life. He was adored by young people. During his last illness a devoted band, who called themselves Sadananda's dogs, watched over him with passionate devotion; they had left all for him, just as he had left all

Dravidians,—all one.[11] At the first impact he realised the spiritual unity of India and Asia and he communicated this discovery to the brethren of Baranagore.

From his second journey in 1889 to Ghazipur, he seems to have brought back some intuition of the Gospel of Humanity, which the new democracies of the West were writing unconsciously and blindly. He told his brethren how "in the West the ancient ideal of divine right, which had formerly been the appanage of one single being, had gradually been recognised as the property of all without distinction of class, and that the human spirit had thus come to a perception of the divinity of Nature and of Unity." He saw and immediately proclaimed the necessity of introducing into India the same ideas which had been tried by America and Europe with such happy results. Thus from the first he exhibited that liberality and greatness of spirit, which seeks and desires the common good, the spiritual progress of all men by the united efforts of all men.

The short journeys that followed in 1889 and 1890 to Allahabad and Ghazipur, still further enlightened

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for Vivekananda. He did not allow the usual relations of disciples and Guru to be established between them; he was their companion. "I can only do one thing for you," he said to them. "That is to take you to the Swamiji." Although he could at times be severe he was always bubbling over with joy—as his chosen name shows—and he transmitted this joy to them. They ever hold him in loving memory.

My readers will pardon this long note, which breaks the thread of the story to a certain extent. The preservation for pious hearts of the West of this "little flower" of India whose culling we owe to Sister Christine, full as it is of Franciscan grace, seemed to me more important than the exigencies of literary composition.

[11] The revelation of Moghul grandeur at Agra reduced him to tears. At Dayodia he re-lived the story of the Ramayana, and at Brindaban the childhood of Krishna. In the retreats of the Himalayas he meditated on the Vedas.

this universal conception. During his interviews at Ghazipur he can be seen travelling towards the synthesis of Hindu faith and modern science, of the ideas of the Vedanta and the social realisations of the present day, of the pure Spirit and the innumerable Gods which are the "Lower ideas" of all religions and are necessary for human weakness; for they are all true in their quality of phantoms of knowledge, various methods and diverse stages in the development of the human spirit, which climbs slowly towards the summit of its being.

These were as yet nothing but flashes, rough sketches of his future. But they were all being stored up and fermenting in his brain. A prodigious force was rising in this young man within the narrow bounds of his convent at Baranagore, of the daily round prescribed by duty and even of communion with his friends. It could no longer be contained. He was forced to break the ties that bound him, to cast off his chains, his way of life, his name, his body—all that was Naren—and to remake with the help of different ones another self wherein the giant which had grown up could breathe freely—to be born again. This rebirth was to be Vivekananda. He was like a Gargantua rending asunder the swathing bands that were throttling him . . . It can no longer be described as the religious Call of the pilgrim, who bids farewell to his brother men in order to follow God! This young athlete, reduced to the point of death by his unused powers, was driven forth by a vital instinct and betrayed into the brutal speech over which his pious disciples have drawn a veil. He said at Benares:

"I am going away; but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog."

We know how he himself vanquished these redoubtable demons, and turned them to the service of the humble in supreme humility, but we nevertheless rejoice at the contemplation of the savage forces of pride and ambition which suffocated him. For he suffered from that excess of power which insists on domination and within him there was a Napoleon.

He accordingly broke loose at the beginning of July 1890, this time for years, from the dear home of Baranagore, which he had founded, from the spiritual nest whereon Ramakrishna himself was brooding. His wings swept him away. He went first to ask for the blessing of the "Holy Mother" (Ramakrishna's widow) [12] for his long journey. He desired to cut himself free from all ties and to go into retreat in the Himalayas. But of all good things solitude (the treasure! and terror of gregarious souls!) is the most difficult to achieve. Parents, friends, all would deny it. (Tolstoy knew this and could never attain it until the deathbed of Astapovo . . .) Social life makes a thousand claims on those who flee it. And how much more when the fugitive is still a young prisoner! Naren discovered this to his cost. And also at the cost of those who loved him! His brother monks were bent upon following him. He was obliged to break with them almost brutally.[13] Even so the tragic world would not allow him to forget it. The death of a sister found him in his solitude. The pitiful victim of a cruel society, she reminded him of the sacrificial fate of the Hindu woman and the sad problems of the life of his people which made it criminal for him to remain a disinterested spectator. By a chain of circumstances, which might be accounted fore-ordained, he was constantly torn from his *Beato Solitudo, Sola Beatitudo* at the very moment when he thought he had at last attained it, and thrown back from the silent Himalayas to the plains filled with the noise and lust of mankind. As the result of these mental agitations added to fatigue, and privation, he had two serious illnesses at Srinagar at the foot of the Himalayas and at Meerut on the Ganges; he almost died of diphtheria. The extreme weakness which followed made it still more difficult for him to achieve his great solitary journey.

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[12] Saradadevi, the good and simple woman, who survived Ramakrishna by more than forty years, and Vivekananda by more than twenty, beloved and revered by all, kept the Master's sentiments with regard to the great disciple. One day Miss MacLeod, (who told me the story) said to Saradadevi: "Your husband had the better part; he stayed in India among his own people: that must have been all joy for him. The Mission of the Swami (Vivekananda) was much more difficult: he had a heroic part to play." "Yes," Saradadevi replied simply. "Swami Vivekananda was the greater. Ramakrishna always said that he was the body and Vivekananda the head." I have quoted this remark, not because I share the same view, but to show Ramakrishna's modesty.

Nevertheless that journey was accomplished. If he was to die it should be on the way, and on his own way—the way revealed to him by his God! In February 1891, in spite of his friends, he left Delhi—alone. This was the great departure. Like a diver he plunged into the Ocean of India, and the Ocean of India covered his tracks. Among its flotsam and jetsam he was nothing more than one nameless sannyasin in saffron robe among a thousand others. But the fires of genius burned in his eyes. He was a prince despite all disguise.

[13] Akhadananda accompanied him to the Himalayas; he there fell ill. At Almora Naren found Saradanada and Tripananda. A little later Turiyananda. They attached themselves to him. He left them at Meerut near the end of January, 1891; their anxious affection followed him to Delhi. His anger was kindled and he ordered them to leave him.

II

THE PILGRIM OF INDIA

His great journey of two years around India and then of three years round the world (was this his original intention?) was the adequate reply of his instinct to the double exigencies of his nature: independence and service. He wandered, free from plan, caste, home, constantly alone with God. And there was no single hour of his life when he was not brought into contact with the sorrows, the desires, the abuses, the misery and the feverishness of living men, rich and poor, in town and field; he became one with their lives; the great Book of Life revealed to him what all the books in the libraries could not have done (for after all they are only collections), which even Ramakrishna's ardent love had only been able to see dimly as in a dream—the tragic face of the present day,—the God struggling in humanity—the cry of the peoples of India and of the world for help—and the heroic duty of the new Oedipus, whose task is to deliver Thebes from the talons of the Sphinx, or to perish with Thebes.

Wanderjahre. Lehrjahre.[1] What a unique education! . . He was not only the humble little brother, who slept in stables or on the pallets of beggars, but he was on a footing of equality with every man, to-day an insulted beggar sheltered by pariahs, to-morrow the guest of princes, conversing on equal terms with Prime

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[1] "Years of travel." "Years of apprenticeship."

Ministers and Maharajahs, the brother of the oppressed bending over their misery, then probing the luxury of the great, awakening care for the public weal in their torpid hearts. He was as conversant with the knowledge of the pandits as with the problems of industrial and rural economy whereby the life of the people is controlled, ever teaching, ever learning, gradually making himself the Conscience of India, its Unity and its Destiny. All of them were incarnate in him, and the world saw them in Vivekananda.

His itinerary led him through Rajputana, Alwar (February to March, 1891), Jaipur, Ajmer, Khetri, Ahmedabad and Kathiawar (end of September), Junagath and Gujerat, Porbandar (a stay of between eight and nine months) Dvaraka, Palitana the city of temples close to the gulf of Khambhat, the state of Baroda, Khandwa, Poona, Belgaum, (October 1892), Bangalore in the state of Mysore, Cochin, Malabar, the state of Travancore, Trivandrur, Madura . . . He travelled to Cape Comorin, the extreme point of the immense pyramid, where is the Benares of Southern India, Rameswaram, the Rome of the Ramayana, and beyond to Kanyakumari, the sanctuary of the Great Goddess (end of 1892).

From North to South the ancient land of India was full of gods; yet the unbroken chain of their countless arms formed only one God. He realised their unity of flesh and spirit. He realised it also in communion with the living of all castes and those outside caste. And he taught them to realise it. He took mutual understanding from the one to the other,—to strong spirits, to the intellectuals obsessed with the abstract, he preached respect for images, and idol Gods,—to young men the duty of studying the grand old books of the past; the

Vedas, the Puranas, the ancient annals, and still more the people of to-day—to all a religious love for mother India and a passion to dedicate themselves to her redemption.

He received no less than he gave. His vast spirit never for a single day failed to widen its knowledge [2] and its experience, and it assimilated all the rivers of thought scattered and buried in the soil of India, for their source seemed identical to him. As far removed from the blind devotion of the orthodox, who were engulfed in the muddy stench of stagnant water, as from the paltry rationalism of the reformers of the Brahmo Samaj, who with the best intentions were busied in drying up the mystic fountains of hidden energy, Vivekananda wished to preserve and to harmonise them all by draining the whole entangled reservoir of the waters of a whole continent possessed by a deeply religious soul.

He desired more than this (nobody with impunity can be the contemporary of the great engineers who cut a passage between oceans, and willy nilly, rejoin the hands of continents!)—everywhere he carried with him the Imitation of Christ, and side by side with the Bhagavad, he spread the thought of Jesus;[3] and he urged young people to study the science of the West.[4]

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[2] At Khetri he became the pupil of the foremost Sanskrit grammarian of the time. At Ahmedabad he completed his knowledge of Mohammedan and Jain culture. At Porbandar he stayed three quarters of a year, in spite of his vow as a wandering monk, to perfect his philosophical and Sanskrit studies with pandit sages; he worked with Trigunakita, who translated the Vedas.

[3] But he was merciless towards the intolerance of the missionaries, and never forgave them for it. The Christ whom he preached opened His arms to all.

[4] During the beginning of his great journey at Alwar in Rajputana (February to March, 1891), when he was hurt by the lack of a spirit of precision, of exactitude and of scientific criticism in

But the widening of his mind was not only in the realm of ideas. A revolution took place in his moral vision with regard to other men and his relations with them. If ever there was pride in a young man, coupled to intellectual intolerance, the contempt of the aristocrat for all that fell below his high ideal of purity, it was present in the young Narendra:

"At twenty years of age (it is he himself speaking) I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic; I would not walk on the footpath on the theatre side of the streets in Calcutta." [5]

During the first months of his pilgrimage when he was with the Maharajah of Khetri near Jaipur, (April 1891) a little dancer gave him all unwittingly a lesson in humility. When she appeared the scornful monk rose to go out. The prince begged him to remain. The little dancer sang:

"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities! Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness. Make of us both the same Brahman! One piece of iron is in the image in the temple, and another the knife in the hand of the butcher. But when they touch the philosopher's stone both alike turn into gold. So Lord, look not upon my evil qualities! Thy name, Lord, is Same-sightedness! . . .

"One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna and another is foul in the ditch by the roadside. But when they fall into the Ganges both alike become holy. So,

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Indian history. He set up the example of the West in opposition to it. He wished India to be inspired with its methods, so that a young school of Hindu historians might arise to devote themselves to resuscitating India's past. "That would be real national education; and thus a true national spirit would be awakened."

[5] Letter of July 6, 1896. He added, "At 33 I can live in the same house with prostitutes."

Lord, do not look upon my evil qualities. Thy name, Lord, is Same-sightedness. . . ."[6]

Naren was completely overwhelmed. The confident faith expressed in the humble song affected him for life. Many years later he recalled it with emotion.

One by one his prejudices disappeared,—even those which he had considered to be most deeply rooted. In the Himalayas he lived among Thibetan races, who practise polyandry. He was the guest of a family of six brothers, who shared the same wife; and in his neophytic zeal he tried to show them their immorality. But it was they who were scandalised by his lessons: "What selfishness!" they said. "To wish to keep one woman all to oneself! . . ." —Truth at the bottom of the mountain and error at the top . . . He realised the relativity of virtue—at least of those virtues having the greatest traditional sanction. Moreover a transcendental irony, as in the case of Pascal, taught him to broaden his moral conception when he judged of good and evil in a race or in an age, according to the standards of that race or that age.

Again he kept company with thieves of the most degraded caste, and came to recognise even in highway robbers "Sinners who were potential saints."[7] Everywhere he shared the privations and the insults of the oppressed classes. In Central India he lived with a family of outcast sweepers. Amid such lowly people who cower at the feet of society he found spiritual treasures, while their misery choked him. He could not bear it. He sobbed,

"O my country! O my country! . . ."

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[6] The poem of a Vaishnavite saint: Suradas.

[7] He met a thief who had plundered his holy Guru, Pavhari Baba, and then touched with repentance had become a monk.

when he learnt from the papers that a man had died of hunger at Calcutta. He asked himself as he beat his chest:

"What have we done, we so-called men of God, the Sannyasins, what have we done for the masses?"

He recalled Ramakrishna's rough words.

"Religion is not for empty bellies."

And waxing impatient with the intellectual speculations of an egoistic faith, he made it the first duty of religion "to care for the poor and to raise them." He imposed this duty on the rich, on officials, and on princes:

"Is there none among you who can give a life for the service of others? Let the study of the Vedanta, and the practise of meditation, be left over to the future life! Let this body be consecrated to the service of others! And then I shall know that you have not come to me in vain."[8]

On a future day his pathetic accents were to sound this sublime utterance:

"May I be born and reborn again and suffer a thousand miseries if only I am able to worship the only God in whom I believe, the sum-total of all souls, and above all, my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all the races! . . ."

At this date, 1892, it was the misery under his eyes, the misery of India, which filled his mind to the exclusion of every other thought. It pursued him, like a tiger following its prey, from the North to the South in his flight across India. It consumed him during sleepless nights. At Cape Comorin it caught and held him in its jaws. On that occasion he abandoned body and soul to it. He dedicated his life to the unhappy masses.

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[8] The notation of these words belongs to a later date. But the sentiment that inspired them belongs to this time.

But how could he help them? He had no money and time was pressing, and the princely gifts of one or two Maharajahs or the offerings of several groups of well-wishers could only nourish a thousandth part of the most urgent needs. Before India woke up from her ataraxy and organised herself for the common good, the ruin of India would be consummated. He lifted up his eyes to the ocean, to the land beyond the seas. He must appeal to the whole world. The whole world had need of India. The health of India, the death of India was its concern as well. Could her immense spiritual reserves be allowed to be destroyed as so many others had been, Egypt and Chaldaea, which long afterwards men struggled to exhume when nothing was left but debris, their soul being dead for ever? . . . An appeal from India to Europe and to America began to take shape in the mind of the solitary thinker. It was at the end of 1891 between Junagad and Porbandar that he appears to have thought of it for the first time. At Porbandar, where he began to learn French, a pandit advised him to go to the West, where his thought would be better understood than in his own country:

"Go and take it by storm and then return!"

At Khanwa in the early autumn of 1892 he heard of a Parliament of Religions to be held during the following year at Chicago, and his first idea was how he might take part in it. At the same time he did not allow himself to take any steps toward the realisation of this project and he refused to accept subscriptions for the purpose, until he had achieved the vow of his great pilgrimage round India. At Bangalore towards the end of October he specifically declared to the Maharajah his intention of going to ask the West "for the means to ameliorate the material condition of India," and to take it in exchange the Gospel of the Vedanta. At the end of 1892 his mind was made up.

At that moment he found himself at the 'land's end' of India, at the extreme southern point where Hanuman the Monkey God made his fabulous leap. But Vivekananda was a man as we are and could not follow the ways of demi-Gods. He had traversed the vast land of India upon the soles of his feet. For two years his body had been in constant contact with its great body; he had suffered from hunger, from thirst, from murderous nature and insulting man; when he arrived at Cape Comorin he was exhausted, but, having no money to pay for a boat to take him to the end of his pilgrimage, to the Holy of Holies, Kanyakumari, he flung himself into the sea, and swam across the shark infested strait. At last his task was at an end, and then, looking back as from the top of a mountain he embraced the whole of the India he had just traversed, and the world of thought that had beset him during his long wanderings. For two years he had lived as in a seething cauldron, consumed with a fever; he had carried "a soul on fire," he was a "tempest." [9] Like criminals of old who suffered the torture of water, he felt himself submerged by the torrents of energy he had accumulated, the walls of his being were crumbling beneath their flood. . . .[10] And when he stopped on the terrace of the tower he had just climbed at the very edge of the earth with the panorama of the world spread before his eyes, the blood pounded in his ears like the sea at his feet; he almost fell. It was the supreme assault of the gods striving within him. When the struggle was over, his first battle had been won. He had seen the path he was to follow. His mission was chosen.

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[9] It was Abhedananda, who, meeting him in October, 1893, in the state of Baroda, described him thus.

[10] "I feel a mighty power! It is as if I were about to blaze forth. There are so many powers in me! It appears to me as if I could revolutionise the world."

He swam back to the continent of India. From the opposite coast he went Northwards. On foot by Ramnad and Pondicherry he came to Madras. And there in the first weeks of 1893, he publicly proclaimed his wish to conduct a Mission in the West.[11] His fame, contrary to his own desire had already spread abroad; he was besieged by visitors in this intellectual and vital city where he stayed on two occasions, and it was in Madras that he founded his first group of devoted disciples, who dedicated themselves to him and who never left him: after his departure they continued to support him with their letters and their faith; and he, from countries far away kept his direction over them. His burning love for India awakened passionate echoes in their hearts, and by their enthusiasm the strength of his own conviction was increased tenfold. He preached against all seeking after personal salvation. It was rather public salvation that ought to be sought, the regeneration of the mother country, the resurrection of the spiritual powers of India and their diffusion throughout the universe. . . .

"The time is ripe. The faith of the Rishis must become dynamic. It must come forth of itself."

Nabobs and bankers offered him money for his journey overseas, but he refused it. He asked the disciples who were collecting subscriptions to appeal rather to the middle classes: for

"I am going on behalf of the people and the poor."

As he had done at the beginning of his pilgrimage he asked the blessing of the Holy Mother for the more distant journey. And she sent him Ramakrishna's as well, for he had delivered it to her for the beloved disciple in a dream.

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[11] This was the title of a lecture he delivered at Hyderabad in February, 1893: My Mission to the West.

It does not appear that he had written to his spiritual brethren at Baranagore: (doubtless he thought that their contemplative souls, used to the warmth of the nest, would be terrified at the thought of social service and evangelising journeys in the countries of the Gentiles; such ideas disturbed the pious calm of souls who were pre-occupied with their own salvation without troubling about others). But chance decreed that almost on the eve of his departure at Mt. Abu station, near Bombay, he met two of them, Brahmananda and Turiyananda; and he told them with pathetic passion, whose repercussions reached Baranagore,[12] the imperious call of suffering India which forced him to go:

"I have now travelled all over India . . . But alas! it was agony to me, my brothers to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears! It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason—to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India that I am now going to America." [13]

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[12] It does not seem, however, that the monks of Baranagore were tempted to follow his example. Even on his triumphal return from America, they found it difficult to yield to his arguments for subordinating and even sacrificing, if need arose, the contemplative life to social service. Only one, Akhandananda (Gangadhar), moved by the words Brahmananda and Turiyananda had brought back, went during 1894 to open schools at Khetri and to work at the education of the masses.

[13] These words quoted in the great *Life of Vivekananda* are completed by Turiyananda's Reminiscences, which Swami Jnane-

swarananda took down and published in the *Morning Star* in January 31, 1926:

Brahmananda and Turiyananda were withdrawn on Mt. Abu, where they were practising a very strict "Tapasya" (practise of meditation and asceticism). They did not expect to meet Naren. They had seen him at Abu Rd. Station several weeks before his departure. Naren told them his plans, his hesitations, and his conviction that the Parliament of Religions was willed by God to prepare his success. Turiyananda recalled each one of his words and the tone of his voice:

"Hari Bhai," Naren cried, his face red with his rising blood, "I cannot understand your so-called religion! . . ."

With a profound expression of sadness and intense emotion through all his being, he pressed a trembling hand upon his heart and added:

"But my heart has grown much, much larger, and I have learnt to feel (the sufferings of others). Believe me I feel it very sadly!"

His voice was choked with feeling. He was silent. Tears streamed down his cheeks.

Turiyananda, in giving this account was himself deeply moved, and his eyes filled with tears:

"You can imagine," he said, "what went through my spirit when I heard these pathetic words and saw the majestic sadness of the Swamiji. 'Are these not,' I thought, 'the very words and feelings of the Buddha.' And I remembered that a long time before, when he had gone to Buddha Gaya to meditate under the Boddhi tree, he had had a vision of the Lord Buddha, who entered into is body . . . I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart. Nobody, continued Turiyananda with passion, nobody could understand Vivekananda unless he saw at least a fraction of the volcanic feelings which were in him.

Turiyananda told of another scene of the same kind, at which he was present after Vivekananda had come back from America—probably in the house of Balaram at Baghazar (Calcutta):

"I had gone to see him and I found him pacing the verandah like a caged lion. He was deep in thought and did not notice my presence. . . . He began to hum under his breath the celebrated and pathetic song of Mirabhai. And the tears welled up in his eyes. He stopped and leaned against the balustrade, and hid his face in his two palms. His voice became more distinct and he sang, repeating several times:

'Oh nobody understands my sorrow!'

And again:

He went to Khetri, where his friend the Maharajah gave him his Diwan (Prime Minister) to escort him to Bombay, where he embarked. At the moment of departure he put on, with the robe of red silk and ochre turban, the name of Vivekananda, which he was about to impose upon the world.[14]

'Only he who suffers knows the anguish of sorrow! . . .'

His voice pierced me through and through like an arrow. I could not understand the cause of his affliction. . . . Then suddenly, I understood. It was his rending sympathy which made him often shed tears of burning blood. And the world would never have known it . . ."

But addressing his listeners, Turiyananda said:

"Do you think that these tears of blood were shed in vain? No! Each one of these tears, shed for his country, every inflamed whisper of his mighty heart, gave birth to troops of heroes, who will shake the world with their thoughts and their deeds."

[14] I have noted the origin of this name, which was given him by the Maharajah. During his journey in India, he bore so many different names, that, just as he desired, he usually passed by unobserved. Many of those who met him had no suspicion of his identity. It was so at Poona in October, 1892; Tilak, the famous sarvant and Hindu political leader, took him at first for a wandering monk of no importance and began by being ironical; then, struck with his replies revealing his great mind and knowledge, he received him into his house for ten days without ever knowing his real name. It was only later when the newspapers brought him from America the echoes of the triumph of Vivekananda, and a description of the conqueror, that he recognised the anonymous guest who had dwelt beneath his roof.

III

THE GREAT JOURNEY TO THE WEST AND THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

THIS journey was in truth an astonishing adventure. The young Swami went into it at random and with his eyes shut. He had heard vaguely of a Parliament of Religions to be opened some day somewhere in America; and he decided to go to it although neither he, nor his disciples nor his Indian friends, students, pandits, ministers or Maharajahs had taken any trouble to find out about it. He knew nothing, neither the exact date, nor the conditions of admission. He did not take a single credential with him. He went straight ahead with complete assurance, as if it was enough for him to present himself at the right time—God's time. And although the Maharajah of Khetri had taken his ticket on the boat for him, and despite his protests had provided him with a beautiful robe, which was to fascinate American idlers no less than his eloquence, neither he nor anybody else had considered the climatic conditions and customs: he froze on the boat when he arrived in Canada in his costume of Indian pomp and ceremony.

He left Bombay on May 31, 1893, and went by way of Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, Hongkong, and then visited Canton and Nagasaki. There he went on foot to Yokohama, seeing Osaka, Kioto and Tokyo. Everywhere, in China as in Japan his attention was attracted by all that might confirm his hypothesis—his conviction

—alike of the religious influence of ancient India over the Empires of the Far East and of the spiritual unity of Asia.[1] At the same time the thought of the ills from which his country was suffering never left him; and the sight of the progress achieved by Japan reopened the wound.

He went from Yokohama to Vancouver; thence by train he found himself towards the middle of July in a state of bewilderment at Chicago. The whole way was strewn with his feathers, for he was a marked prey for the fleecer: he could be seen from afar! At first like a great child he wandered gazing, mouth agape, in the world's fair, the Universal Exhibition of Chicago. Everything was new to him and both surprised and stupified him. He had never imagined the power, the riches, the inventive genius of this Western world. Being of a stronger vitality and more sensitive to the appeal of force than a Tagore or a Gandhi, who were oppressed by the frenzy of movement and noise, by the whole European-American (especially American) mechanism, Vivekananda was at his ease in it at least at first; he succumbed to its exciting intoxication, and his first feeling was of juvenile acceptance; his admiration knew no bounds. For twelve days he filled his eager eyes with this new world. Then he bethought himself to go to the Enquiry Bureau of the Parliament of Religions . . . What a shock! He found out that the Parliament did not open until after the first of September—and that it was too late for the registration of delegates—moreover, that no registration would be accepted without official references. He had none, he was unknown, without credentials from any known group; and his purse was nearly empty; it would not allow him to wait until the opening of the Congress . . . He was overwhelmed. He cabled his distress to friends in Madras so that some official religious society might make him a grant. But official Societies do not pardon independence, which has had the audacity to leave their ranks. The chief of this Society sent the reply:

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[1] He was struck when he visited the Chinese temples, consecrated by the first Buddhist Emperor, to find Sanskrit manuscripts written in Bengal characters. He noticed the same in Japan in the temples—inscriptions of *mantras* (sacred texts) in Sanskrit in ancient Bengal characters.

"Let the devil die of cold!"

The devil neither died nor gave up! He threw himself upon fate, and instead of hoarding in inaction the few dollars remaining to him, he spent them in visiting Boston. Fate helped him. Fate always helps those who know how to help themselves. A Vivekananda never passed anywhere unnoticed but fascinated even while he was unknown. In the Boston train, his appearance and conversation struck a fellow traveller, a rich Massachusetts lady who questioned him and then interested herself in him, invited him to her house, introduced him to the Hellenist, J. H. Wright, professor at Harvard: the latter was at once struck by the genius of this young Hindu and put himself entirely at his disposal; he insisted that Vivekananda should represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions and wrote to the President of the Committee. He offered the penniless pilgrim a railway ticket to Chicago, and letters of recommendation to the Commission for finding lodgings. In short, all his difficulties were removed.

Vivekananda returned to Chicago. The train arrived late; and the dazed young man, who had lost the address of the Committee, did not know where to go. Nobody would deign to instruct a coloured man. He saw a big empty box in a corner of the station, and slept in it. In the morning he went to discover the way, begging from door to door as a Sannyasin. But he was in a city that knows, Panurge-like, a thousand and one ways of making money—except one, the way of St. Francis, the vagrancy of God. It must be added that he found himself in a purely German-speaking district where nobody understood him; they treated him as a negro and shut the door in his face. After having wandered for a long time, he sat down exhausted in the street. He was noticed from a window opposite and asked whether he were not a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. He was invited in; and once more fate found for him one who was later numbered amongst his most faithful American followers.[2] When he had rested he was taken to the Parliament, and he remained during its sessions in the house of his rescuer.

His adventurous journey which had almost ended disastrously, brought him on this occasion into port, but not for rest. Action called him for now that fate had done its worst it had to give place to resolution! The unknown of yesterday, the beggar, the man despised for his colour by a Mob wherein the dregs of more than half a dozen of the peoples of the world meet—at the first glance was to impose his sovereign genius.

On Monday, September 11, 1893, the first session of the Parliament was opened. In the centre presided Cardinal Gibbons. Round him to the right and left were grouped the Oriental delegates: Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, the chief of the Brahmosamaj, an old friend of Vivekananda, representing with Nagarkar of Bombay the Indian theists, Bharmapala, representing the Buddhists of Ceylon; Gandhi,[3] representing the Jains; Chakravati, representing with Annie Besant the Theosophical Society. But amongst them all it was the young man who represented nothing,—and everything—the man belonging to no sect but rather to India as a whole, who drew the glance of the thousand present.[4] His fascinating face, his noble stature—and the gorgeous apparel[5] which heightened the effect of this apparition from a legendary world hid his own emotion. He made no secret of it. It was the first time that he had had to speak before such an assembly; and as the delegates, presented one by one, had to announce themselves in public in a brief harangue, Vivekananda let his turn go by hour after hour until the end of the day.[6]

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[2] Mrs. Hale.

But then his speech was like a tongue of flame. Among the grey wastes of cold dissertation it fired the souls of the listening throng. Hardly had he pronounced the very simple opening words:

"Sisters and brothers of America! . . ."

than some of them got up in their places and applauded. He wondered whether he really spoke of his own volition. He was certainly the first to cast off the formalism of the Congress and to speak to the masses in the language for which they were waiting. Silence fell again. He greeted the youngest of the nations in the name of the most ancient monastic order in the world—the Vedic order of Sannyasins. He presented Hinduism as the mother of religions, who had taught them the double precept:

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[3] Naturally this was not the same as our M. K. Gandhi, who about that time was landing in South Africa. But his family had intimate relations with the Jains and it may well have been that the Gandhi of the Parliament of Religions was a distinct connection.

[4] The American Press testified the truth of this.

[5] His red robe, drawn in at the waist by an orange cord, his great yellow turban, accentuated the raven black of his hair, his olive complexion, his dark eyes, his red lips. (Description of the papers).

[6] Let us add that the improvident one had prepared nothing, while the others read from a written text.

"Accept and understand one another!"

He quoted two beautiful passages from the sacred books:

"Whoever comes to Me, through whatsover form, I reach him."

"All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me."

Each of the other orators had spoken of his God, of the God of his sect. He—he alone—spoke of all their Gods, and embraced them all in the universal Being. It was the breath of Ramakrishna, breaking down the barriers through the mouth of his great disciple. The Parliament of Religions gave the young orator an ovation.

During the ensuing days he spoke again ten or eleven times.[7] Each time he repeated with new arguments but

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[7] Both at the plenary sessions of the Parliament and at the sceintific sections which were affiliated to it. His principal dissertations were on the following subjects:

1. Why we disagree. (he there denounced the insularity of different religious points of view, which is the source of fanaticism).
2. Religion not the crying need of India. (But bread. An appeal for help for all his people who were dying).
2. September 22. Vedantic Philosophy.
4. September 23. Orthodox Hinduism and modern religions of India.
5. September 25. The Essence of the Hindu religion.
6. September 26, Buddhism, the fulfilment of Hinduism.
And four other Lectures.
But the most famous discourses were:
11. September 19. The most famous Paper on Hinduism, although he was its sole universal representative at the

with the same force of conviction his thesis of a universal Religion without limit of time or space, uniting the whole *Credo* of the human spirit, from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science. He harmonised them into a magnificent synthesis, which far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature.[8] There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution.

"Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you. Asoka's council[9] was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's[10] though more to the purpose, was only a parlour meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.

May he who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you. . . .[11] The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But

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Congress without distinction of sect. We shall return to it later when we examine Vivekananda's thought.

12. September 27. Address at the Final Session of the Congress.

[8] But the young Hinduist, convinced in spite of himself of the superiority of his own ideal, presented Hinduism in its essentials, but rejuvenated and purified of its degenerate parts, as the universal religion of which he spoke.

[9] The Council of Patalipura, to which the Emperor Asoka convoked the Buddhists about 253. B.C.

[10] The great Moghul Emperor of the XVIth century (1556-1605), who, abjuring Islam, tried to found with the agreement of the Hindus, Jains, Musulmans, Parsis, and even Christians, eclectic rationalism, which was to become an imperial religion.

[11] Paper on Hinduism. (19 September).

each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth . . . The Parliament of Religions . . . has proved . . . that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character . . . Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of . . . resistance: 'Help and Not Fight.' 'Assimilation and Not Destruction.' 'Harmony and Peace and Not Dissension.' "[12]

The effect of these powerful words was immense. Over the heads of the official representatives of the Parliament, they were addressed to all, and appealed to outside thought. Vivekananda's fame at once spread abroad; and India as a whole benefited. The American Press recognised him: "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."[13]

It can be imagined that such an avowal did not sound sweetly in the ears of Christian missionaries, and Vivekananda's success roused bitter rancour amongst them, which did not stop short of the use of the most dishonourable weapons. It sharpened no less the jealousy of certain Hindu representatives, who saw themselves put in the shade by this "wandering monk," without title or ties. Theosophy in particular, which Vivekananda did not spare never forgave him.[14]

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[12] Address at the Final Session. (27 September).

[13] *The New York Herald.* The *Boston Evening Post* stated that he was "the great favourite of the Parliament." It was only necessary for him to cross the platform to be greeted with acclamations. And the only way of keeping the public at the meetings, for their attention often wearied, was to announce that Vivekananda would speak at the end.

What did he think of his victory? He wept over it. The wandering monk saw that his free solitary life with God was at an end. Is there any truly religious soul who does not sympathise with his regrets? He had himself desired it . . . or rather he had been *desired* by the unknown force, that had dictated his mission . . . But there was always the other inner voice, which said to him: "Renounce! Live in God!" He never could satisfy the one without partially denying the other. Hence the periodic crises traversed by this stormy genius, and the torments, which apparently contradictory but really logical, can never be understood by single minded spirits, by those who, having only one thought in their heads, make of their poverty an obligatory virtue, and who call the mighty and pathetic struggling towards harmony of souls too richly endowed, either confusion or duplicity. Vivekananda was and will always be the butt of such malevolent interpretations which his high pride made no attempt to excuse.

But his complexities at this time, were not only of the spirit. They were inherent in the situation itself. After as before success (and perhaps even more so) his task was a difficult one. Having nearly succumbed to poverty, he was now in danger of being overwhelmed by riches. American snobbery threw itself upon him, and, in its first flush, threatened to smother him with its luxury and vanities. Vivekananda grew almost physically sick from this excess of money. At night in his bedroom he gave vent to cries of despair, and rolled on the ground when he thought of the people who were dying of hunger.

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[14] In an address at Madras on his return from America: *My plan of campaign,* Vivekananda unmasked all those who had attacked him, and told the Theosophical Society sharply what he thought of them. See further, Note at the end of the Volume where we shall give the text and treat of the question of Vivekananda's relations with the Theosophists. The reader may also consult the Account of the Journey of a Philosopher, by Count Keyserling, the chapter on Adyar, the Headquarters in India of the Theosophical Society, where the spirit of the society is impregnated with singular narrowness of view.

"O Mother," he groaned, "What have I to do with fame when my people are lying in misery! . ."

In order to serve the cause of his unfortunate India and to free himself from the tutelage of his rich protectors, he accepted the offer of a Lecture Bureau for a tour of the United States: The East and Middle West, Chicago, Iowa, Des Moines, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, Washington, New York, etc. But this proved a risky method; for it was a mistake to imagine that he, like so many other lecturers, was going to buy applause and dollars by burning incense under the nose of the American public.

His first feeling of attraction and admiration for the formidable power of the young republic had faded. Vivekananda, almost at once fell foul of the brutality, the inhumanity, the littleness of spirit, the narrow fanaticism, the monumental ignorance, the crushing incomprehension, so frank and sure of itself with regard to all who thought, who believed, who regarded life differently from the paragon nation of the human race . . . And he had no patience. He hid nothing. He stigmatised the vices and crimes of Western civilisation, with its characteristics of violence, pillage, and destruction. Once when he was to speak at Boston on a beautiful religious subject particularly dear to him,[15] he felt such repulsion at sight of the audience, the artificial and cruel crowd of men of affairs and of the world, that he refused to yield them the key of his sanctuary, and brusquely changing the subject, he inveighed furiously against a civilisation represented by such foxes and wolves . . .[16] The scandal was terrific. Hundreds noisily left the hall, and the Press was furious.

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[15] Ramakrishna.

He was especially bitter against false Christianity and religious hypocrisy.

"With all your brag and boasting where has your Christianity succeeded without the sword?—Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. It is all hypocrisy that I have heard in the country. All this prosperity, all this from Christ! Those who call upon Christ care for nothing but to amass riches! Christ would not find a stone on which to lay his head among you . . . You are not Christians. Return to Christ! . . ."

An explosion of anger was the answer to this scornful lesson, and from that moment he had always at his heels a band of clergymen, who followed him with invective and accusation, even going so far as to spread infamous calumnies of his life and behaviour in America and India.[17] No less shameful was the action of certain Hindu representatives of rival societies, who were offended by Vivekananda's glory, and did not scruple to spread the base charges started by malevolent missionaries. And in their turn, the Christian missionaries used the weapons provided by the jealous Hindus,[18] and denounced the free Sannyasin in India with almost comic zeal because in America he no longer kept to the strict regime prescribed by orthodox Hinduism.[19] Vivekananda with disgust saw the scum of the rancorous wave raised by the devotees returning to him from India in the frightened letters of his disciples. And with what scorn he flung it back in the face of those who had bespattered him with it![20]

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[16] I have heard a similar scene related about a great Hindu poet, whom we will venerate. He was invited to the United States to address a meeting on the subject of a work very near to his heart. But when he saw the audience, who were prepared to subscribe to it, he was so revolted at the sight that he attacked them and their stifling material civilisation. Hence he himself destroyed the work whose success seemed assured.

[17] It goes without saying that they produced the classic accusation of Anglo-Saxon countries, seduction! In order to stop the false rumour spread by a vulgar-minded clergyman, that he had wronged a servant dismissed by the Governor of Michigan, letters of public denial (March 1895) were necessary from the Governor's wife, testifying to the moral dignity of Vivekananda. But no denials ever repair the damage done by unscrupulous lies.

A letter from one of his American disciples, Swami Kripananda,[21] depicts in retrospect his tribulations in the United States:

[18] Some of the Brahmos treated as blasphemy certain of Vivekananda's expositions of Vedantism in America: his "pretensions to divinity," (that is to say to the divinity of the human soul), his "denial of sin," (which came to him from Ramakrishna), his "evolutionism," his "Western ideas introduced into Hinduism" etc. (cf B. Mozoomdar in a pamphlet on *Vivekananda, the informer of Max Müller*). He had against him a curious alliance of Protestant missionaries, of Theosophists, and some members of the Brahmosamaj.

[19] The chief charge was that he had eaten beef. He made no secret of it. He hated bigotry which believes that it is acquitted in respect of morality and God, when it has observed certain practices, holding their non-observance as a cardinal sin. He held nothing inviolable save his two vows of poverty and chastity. For the rest with much common sense he held that a man should follow as far as possible the customs of the country in which he was living.

[20] To the scandalised remonstrances of Indian devotees, horrified to hear that their Swami ate impure food at the table of infidels, he retorted:

"Do you mean to say I am born to live and die one of those caste ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards that you only find amongst the educated Hindus? I hate cowardice. I will have nothing to do with cowards . . . I belong to India just as much as to the world, no humbug about that . . . What country has any special claim upon me? Am I any nation's

"This hotbed of pseudo-religious monstrosities, devoured by a morbid thirst for the abnormal, for the occult, for the exceptional—whence a senseless credulity leads to the dissemination of hundreds of societies: goblins, ghosts, mahatmas, false prophets—this refuge for aliens of all colours was an abominable place to Vivekananda. He felt himself obliged at the outset to cleanse this Augean stable."

He committed to the devil the idlers, buffoons, fishers in troubled waters, gulls, who thronged to his first lectures. He was immediately the recipient of offers of association, promises, threats, and blackmailing letters from intriguers, busy bodies, and religious charlatans. It is needless to state their effect on a character such as his. He would not tolerate the slightest domination. He rejected every alliance of one sect against another. And more than once he embraced the opportunity to engage in a public struggle without quarter against "combinations" wishing to use him for their own ends.

For the honour of America it must be said here and now that his moral intransigeance, his virile idealism, his dauntless loyality attracted to him from all sides a chosen band of defenders and admirers, a group of whom were to form his first Western disciples and the most active agents in his work for human regeneration.

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slave? . . . I see a greater Power than man, or God, or devil at my back. I require nobody's help. I have been all my life helping others. . . ."

(Letter written from Paris, September 9, 1895, to his Indian disciples.)

[21] Kripananda was the name taken by Leon Lansberg, at his initiation. He was a Russian Jew by birth, a naturalised American citizen, and part owner of a big New York journal, and was one of the first Western disciples accepted by Vivekananda. I shall speak of him later.

The letter of which I give a summary, was written in 1895 in the Madras Journal, *The Brahmavadin.*

IV

AMERICA AT TIME OF VIVEKANANDA'S FIRST VISIT. THE ANGLO-SAXON FORERUNNERS OF THE SPIRIT OF ASIA: EMERSON, THOREAU, WALT WHITMAN

It would be a matter of deep interest to know exactly how far the American spirit had been impregnated, directly or indirectly by the infiltration of Hindu thought during the XIXth century: for there can be no doubt that it has contributed to the strange moral and religious mentality of the modern United States which Europe has so much difficulty in understanding,—with its astonishing mixture of Anglo-Saxon Puritanism, Yankee optimism of action, pragmatism, "scientism," and pseudo-Vedantism. I do not know whether any historian will be found to occupy himself seriously with the question. It is nevertheless a psychological problem of the first order, intimately connected with the history of our civilisation. I do not possess the means for its solution, but at least I can indicate certain elements in it.

It would seem that one of the chief people to introduce Hindu thought into the United States was Emerson,[1] and that Emerson in so doing had been deeply influenced by Thoreau.

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[1] The article of a Hindu, Brahmachundra Maitra, entitled *Emerson from an Indian point of view,* in the Harvard Theological Review of 1911 was mentioned to me in this connection. But I have not been able to study it.

He was predisposed to such influences; from 1830 onwards they began to appear in his Journal, wherein he noted references to Hindu religious texts. His famous lecture, which created a scandal at the time, given in 1838 at the University of Harvard expressed belief in the divine in man akin to the concept of the soul, *Atman Brahman.* It is here that he attached a strictly moral or moralist interpretation to it, his own mark and that of his race. But its fulfilment was the ecstatic realisation of a veritable yoga of "justice," conceived in the double sense of moral good and cosmic equilibrium and uniting at one and the same time Karma (action) bhakti (love) and jnana (wisdom).[2]

Emerson exercised little method either in his reading or writing; and Cabot, in his Memoir of him, tells us that he was easily satisfied with extracts and quotations and did not consult the authorities as a whole. But Thoreau was a great reader; and between 1837 and 1862 he was Emerson's neighbour. In July 1846 Emerson notes that Thoreau had been reading to him extracts from his "Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers." Now this work (section, Monday) is an enthusiastic eulogy of the Gita, and of the great poems and philosophies of India. Thoreau suggested "A joint

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[2] "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God: the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God, do enter into that man with justice . . . For all beings proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes . . . The perception of this law of laws awakens in the mind a sentiment which we call the religious sentiment, and which makes our highest happiness. Wonderful is its power to charm and to command. It is a mountain air . . . It makes the sky and the hills sublime, and the silent song of the stars is it. . . ."

(Address to the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge (U. S. A.) July 15, 1838.)

Bible" of the Asiatic Scriptures, "Chinese, Hindus, Persians, Hebrews, to carry to the ends of the earth." And he took for his motto, *Ex Oriente Lux.*[3]

It may be imagined that such suggestions were not thrown away upon Emerson, and that the ardent *Asiatism* of Thoreau extended to him.

It was at the same time that the "Transcendental Club," he had founded was in full swing; and after 1850, the *Dial,* its quarterly, which he edited with the American Hypatia, Margaret Fuller, published translations from the Oriental languages. The emotion produced in him by Indian thought must have been very strong, for him to write in 1856 such a deeply pedantic poem as his beautiful Brahma.[4]

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[3] Thoreau gives his sources: a French translation of the Gita, whose author must be Burnouf, although he does not mention him, published in 1840, and more important, the English translation of Charles Wilkins of which an edition had just appeared in 1846 with a preface of Warren Hastings. I have said that this great man (Hastings) the conqueror, although he governed India, submitted to and publicly avowed the spiritual domination of the land of the Vedas. In 1786 he "recommended" a translation of the Bhagavadgita to the President of the East India Company, and wrote a preface to it. I have quoted from Thoreau himself in my Life of Ramakrishna, the magnificent witness of Warren Hastings, where he declares that "the writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance." Thoreau also mentions other Hindu works, such as the Shakuntala of Kalidas, and speaks enthusiastically of Manu, whom he knew through the translations of William Jones. His "Weeks Journey," written from 1839 onwards, was published in 1849.

I owe these details to Miss Ethel Sidewick, who was kind enough to look them up for me with the learned help of the Master of Balliol College and a Prof. Goddard of Swarthmore College (Pennsylvania). I here make grateful acknowledgment to them for their valuable help.

[4] (Here comes a translation into French verse of the poem Brahma). It may please the reader to study it here:

It must be taken into consideration that New England was passing through a crisis of spiritual renaissance and intoxicating idealism, corresponding (though composed of very different elements, less cultivated, more robust, and infinitely nearer to nature) to the idealistic flame of Europe before 1848.[5] The anarchic Brookfarm of George Ripley, (between 1840 and 1847), the feverish assembly of the *Friends of Universal Progress* at Boston in 1840, brought together in one group men and women of all opinions and professions, all fired with primitive energy, and aspiring to shake off the shackles of past lies without knowing what truth to adopt; for no human society can live unless it has persuaded itself that it possesses the Truth![6]

If the red slayer think he slays
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass and turn again.

My friends Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brooks have given me some important details. In 1854 the Englishman, Thomas Cholmondeley, the nephew of the great Bishop, Reginald Heber, visited Concord and became the friend of the whole intellectual colony. On his return to England, he sent Thoreau a collection of oriental classics in 44 volumes. Thoreau said that it was practically impossible to find any of these works in America. It may justly be thought that Emerson's poem Brahma, was the flower of the tree which had just drunk deep of this flood of Indian thought.

[5] This is only one example among a thousand others of the synchronism of the human Soul in its most diverse ethnic expressions —which has often led me to think, as I have studied history, of the different branches of one same tree, mutually sharing the same changing seasons. The conviction has slowly ripened in my mind until it is now firmly established that all the laws governing the particular evolution of peoples, nations, classes and their struggles are subordinate to greater cosmic laws controlling the general evolution of humanity.

[6] John Morley, in his critical Essay on Emerson has painted a charming picture of this hour of intellectual intoxication—of

Alas! the Truth espoused by America during the subsequent half century bears no resemblance to the generous expectation of the honeymoon! Truth was not ripe, still less those who wished to pluck it. Its failure was, however, by no means due to lack of noble ideals and great ideas, but they were all too mixed and too hastily digested without time for them to be healthily assimilated. The nervous shocks, produced by the grave political and social upheavals after the war of Secession, the morbid haste which has developed into the frantic rhythm of modern civilisation, have thrown the American spirit off its balance for a long time. It is, however, not difficult to trace during the second half of the century the seeds sown by the free pioneers of Concord, Emerson and Thoreau. But from their grain what strange bread has been kneaded by the followers of the "mind cure" and of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy!

Both of them have used, more or less wittingly, Indian elements strained through the idealism of Emerson.[7] But they have reduced them to the dead

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this "madness of enthusiasm," as Shaftesbury called it, which from 1820 to 1848 turned the heads of New England.

Harold D. Carey, in a recent article in the *Bookman* (February 1929) devoted chiefly to this strange Brookfarm, has shown the revolutionary character of its spiritual and social movement and the impression of "Bolshevism" which it produced on the minds of the governing classes and on middle class opinion. It was an unchaining of terrifying and troublous furies. Especially did they turn against Emerson, and accuse him of being chiefly responsible for the spirit of revolt. Our generation has all too soon forgotten the very brave part played by Emerson, and his friends. Thoreau and Theodore Parker, who at the same time publicly flagellated legal lies, and protested against the nascent monster of imperialism in affairs (on the occasion of the war engineered by the American Government against Mexico in 1847).

[7] William James said of the 'mind cure': "It is made up of the following elements: the four Gospels, the idealism of Berkeley and Emerson, spiritism with its law of the radical evolution of

souls through their successive lives, optimistic and vulgar evolutionism, and the religions of India."

Charles Baudouin adds that after 1875 the influence of the French hypnotic schools was superimposed. He notes that in return Coue has profited by it, for he learnt English especially to make the acquaintance of the vulgarised mysticism of America and has developed from it its simplest, most rational and positivist expression.

But it is necessary to go back to the magnetism of Mesmer at the beginning of the XVIIIth century for the common source and further to the elements making up this powerful and enigmatic personality (cf. Pierre Janet: *Meditations psychologiques,* Vol. 1. Alcan, 1919).

As for Christian Science it is enough to mention the little lexicon of philosophic and religious terms added by Mrs. Eddy to her Bible: Science and Health, in order to see the likeness of certain of its fundamental ideas to those of Hindu Vedantism:

"Me or I. The divine principle. The Spirit, the soul . . . Eternal Mind. There is only one ME or US, only one Principle or Mind, which governs all things . . . Everything reflects or refracts in God's Creation one unique Mind; and everything which does not reflect this unique mind is false and a cheat. . . ."

"God.—The great I AM . . . Principle, Spirit, Soul, Life, Truth, love, all substance, intelligence."

It would appear that Mrs. Eddy did not wish to acknowledge their origin. She has been silent on that point in the new editions of her book. But in the first she quoted from Vedantic philosophy. The Swami Abhedananda, a disciple of Ramakrishna, has related that the 24th edition of Science and Health contained a chapter, now suppressed, which began with four Vedantic quotations. In the same chapter Mrs. Eddy quoted the Bhagavadgita, from the translation of Charles Wilkins, published in London in 1785 and in New York in 1867. These quotations were later omitted from the book: only one or two veiled allusions can be found to Indian thought. This attempt at dissimulation for the sake of the unwarned reader is a clumsy confession of its importance. (Cf. an Article by Madeleine R. Harding, in the *Prabuddha Bharata Review,* March 1928).

Lastly, analogies to Indian thought are still more striking in the most important treatises on the Mind cure by Horatio W. Dresser, Henry Wood, and R. W. Trine. But as they date from the end of the century, that is to say after the death of Vivekananda, they may well have owed much to the teachings of the latter. They agree on all points with the rules of *yogic* concentration and with the faith behind it. The French reader will find some characteristic extracts in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James. (Pages in French edition are 80-102.)

level of a utilitarianism looking only to the immediate profit, of a kind of mystic hygiene, resting on a prodigious credulity which gives to Christian Science [8] its proud pseudo-scientific aspect and its pseudo-Christianity.

One trait common to these doctrines is the vulgar optimism, which resolves the problem of evil by a simple denial, or rather by its omission. "Evil does not exist. Then, let us turn away our eyes!" . . . Such an intellectual attitude in all its native simplicity was too often that of Emerson. He omitted as often as possible from his subjects those of illness or death. He hated the shades. "Respect the light!" But it was the respect of fear. His eyes were feeble and so he began by putting the sun under a shade. In this he was only too closely followed by his fellow-countrymen. Perhaps it is not too much to say that such optimism was necessary for action, but I have no great faith in the energy of a man or of a people, which rests on conditions contrary to the *Natura Rerum.* I prefer Margaret Fuller's saying, "I accept the universe." But whether one accepts it or not, the first essential is to see it and to see it as a whole! We shall soon hear Vivekananda saying to his English disciples: "Learn to recognise the Mother, in Evil, Terror, Sorrow, Denial as well as in Sweetness, and in Joy." Similarly the smiling Ramakrishna from the depths of his dream of love and bliss, could see and remind the complaisant preachers of a "good God" that Goodness was not enough to define the Force which daily sacrificed thousands of innocents. Therein lies the capital difference separating India from heroic Greece and Anglo-Saxon optimism. They look Reality in the face, whether they embrace it as in India or struggle against it and try to subdue it as in Greece; but with them action never impinges on the domain of Knowledge as in America, where Knowledge has been domesticated in the service of action and wears a livery with gold braided cap bearing the name: Pragmatism.[9] It is easily understood that a Vivekananda would not like such trappings, concealing as they did puny and degraded bastards of his glorious free and sovereign Vedantism of India.[10]

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[8] It is to be remarked that this name, Christian Science, had already been used by a precursor of Mrs. Eddy, Dr. Quimby, who several years before her (about 1863) had laid down a similar doctrine under the name of Christ Science, Christian Science, Divine Science, the Science of Health. Quimby's manuscripts, recently published, establish his influence over Mrs. Eddy.

But overtopping this herd of living men there was a dead giant,[11] whose shade was a thousand times warmer than such pale reflections of the Sun of Being seen through their cold methodist window panes. He stood before Vivekananda and held out his great hand to him . . . How was it that he did not take it? . . . Or rather (for we know that later in India Vivekananda read his Leaves of Grass) how is it that Vivekananda's chroniclers however careless and ill-informed, have managed to leave this capital event out of their story: the meeting of the Indian Ambassador of the *Atman Brahman* with the epic singer of "Myself"—Walt Whitman!

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[9] In weakened post-war Europe these same moral characteristics have unfortunately the tendency to be established: and the worst feature of this moral slackness is that it is accompanied with false bragging which flatters itself on its realism and virility.

[10] At the time of his first stay in the United States, the Metaphysical College of Massachusetts, opened by Mrs. Eddy at Boston, where she taught in seven years more than four thousand pupils, was temporarily closed (in October 1889) in order to allow the foundress, "Pastor Emeritus of the first Church of Christ Scientist," to write her new *Science and Health,* which was published in 1891. The College re-opened under her presidency in 1899.

The Mind Cure was flourishing, and produced the *New Thought,* which is to Christian Science what rationalistic Protestantism is to orthodox Catholicism.

The Theosophical Society of which one of the two founders, Colonel Olcott, (in 1875) was an American, worked vigorously in India and elsewhere. His action, as I have said, now and then came up against that of Vivekananda.

I have only mentioned here the three chief currents then stirring the religious subconsciousness of America, together with *"revivalism"* (the religion of revivals) also leading to abandonment to subconscious forces—while Myers was evolving (between 1886 and 1905) the scientific spirit theory of knowledge and the subconscious life.

A crater in eruption. Mud and fire.

He had just died on March 26, 1892, the previous year, near Camden, the workman's suburb of Philadelphia. The triumphant memory of his obsequies—not pagan as they have been described, but exactly in the spirit of Indian universalism,[12] were still reverberating. Vivekananda saw more than one of Whitman's intimates coming to him; he was even joined in friendship to him who had bidden the last farewell to the poet,[13] the famous agnostic and materialist author, Robert Ingersoll.[14] He more than once argued with him in friendly fashion, so it is impossible that he should not have heard of Whitman.

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[11] Besides Whitman who was already dead there was another, no less great, who had no less affinity to the spirit of India: Edgar Allen Poe: his *Eureka,* published in 1848, showed thought closely akin to that of the Upanishads. Some people, such as Waldo Frank, believe that he must in the course of his wanderings (it is practically certain that he visited Russia in his early youth) have come in contact with Indian mysticism. But Eureka did not affect contemporary thought. Even though Whitman for a time collaborated with Poe (in the Broadway Journal and in the Democratic Review), it is certain that he never made an intimate of Poe, that he never fathomed his thought, that he in fact felt an instinctive antipathy for him, and that it was only with an effort that he made a tardy recognition of his greatness. (In 1875, at the age of 56, he went to Baltimore for the inauguration of a monument to Poe). Poe remained an isolated figure in his age.

[12] Between each discourse some great saying was read from the Bible of humanity:—"Here are the words of Confucius, of Gautama Buddha, of Jesus Christ, of the Koran, of Isaiah, of John, of the Zend Avesta, of Plato. . . ."

However famous this great man may be through the many works that have been devoted to him in all lands, it is necessary for me to give here a short account of his religious thought; for that is the side of his work that has come least into the limelight—and at the same time it is the kernel.

There is nothing hidden in the meaning of his thought. The good Whitman does not veil his nakedness. His faith appears best of all in *Leaves of Grass,* and is especially concentrated in one great poem which has been thrown too much into the shade by his *Song of Myself,* but which must be replaced in the front rank where Whitman himself placed it, at the head of his own definitive edition, immediately following the Inscriptions, namely his *Starting from Paumanok.*[15]

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[13] In this farewell speech Ingersoll celebrated the poet who had sung the splendid "Psalm of Life" and tribute of thanks to the mother in response to her kiss and her embrace. Ingersoll thought of Nature as "the Mother." Whitman's poems are full of Her, and there she is sometimes Nature, "the great, savage, silent Mother, accepting all," sometimes America, "the redoubtable Mother, the great Mother, thou Mother with equal children." But whatever may be the mighty entity to which the word is attached, it always represents a conception of a sovereign Being, and their deep tones recall the conception of India; they are always attached to the visible God, whereon all living beings depend.

[14] The great Life of Vivekananda, published by his disciples, has very briefly noticed several of these interviews, merely remarking about them that they show that Vivekananda had the entree into the freest and most advanced circles of American thought. Ingersoll in the course of one discussion, warned Vivekananda in a friendly way to be prudent. He revealed to him the hidden fanaticism of America, not as yet stamped out. Forty years before, he said, an Indian Vedantist would have run the risk of being burnt alive, and still more recently of being stoned.

What does he say there?

"I inaugurate a religion . . .

. . . I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake . . .

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion . . .

I sing . . .

For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising inclusive and more resplendent. The greatness of Love and of Democracy, and the greatness of religion . . ."

(Why then have the first two "greatnesses," which are of an inferior order, generally eclipsed the first, which embraces and dominates them, in the minds of Whitman's commentators?)

What was this religion which so filled his heart that he meditated spreading it abroad throughout all lands by means of lectures, in spite of the little taste he had for speaking in public?[16] It is summed up and contained in one word, which rings in the ears wonderfully like Indian music; the word *Identity.* It fills the whole work. It is to be found in almost all his poems.[17]

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[15] "Paumanok" does not appear in the first three editions (1855, 1856, and 1860-1). It is not included until the fourth (1867), where it is placed at the beginning of the volume. But in the first edition of the Leaves of Grass, as my friend Lucien Price pointed out to me, the Song of Myself opens on page 1; and in its primitive, much shorter, much starker and more virile form, it produces a striking impression: everything that is vital and heroic in the Great Message is to be found in it, condensed with flaming clarity. Cf. William Sloane Kennedy: *"The Fight of a Book in the World."*

[16] Ibid. p. 140. 171. He thought of it before and after the publication of his poems.

[17] *Starting from Paumanok, Song of Myself, Calamus, Cross-*

Identity with all forms of life at every instant; the immediateness of realised Unity; and the certainty of Eternity for every second, for every atom of Existence.

How had Whitman come by this faith?

Certainly by enlightenment, by some blow he had experienced, by illumination, probably arising from some spiritual crisis a short time after he had reached his thirtieth year and experienced the emotions aroused by his journey to New Orleans,[18] of which little is known.

It is improbable that it was any reading of Indian thought that touched him. When Thoreau in November 1856, came to tell him that his Leaves of Grass

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ing Brooklyn Ferry, A Song of Joys, Drum Taps, To Think of Time, etc.

The word can be used to mean two rather different things. 1. the more usual: an immediate perception of Unity; 2. the permanence of the Ego throughout the eternal journey and its metamorphoses. It seems to me that it is this latter meaning that predominates in his years of illness and old age.

If I was about to make a complete study of Whitman here, it would be necessary to trace the evolution of his thought, without however losing sight of its essential unity, under the blows of life, from which he suffered much more than his publicly confessed optimism would lead one to believe. Cf. in the collection: *"Whispers Divine of Heavenly Death"* his *"Hours of Despair."* Then the invincible spirit insufficiently nourished by life is restored by death. Then the "known" life is completed by the "Unknown." Then "day" brings new light to "non-day" Cf. *To think of Time: Night on the Prairies.* And his ear is opened to other "music" that his "ignorance" had not previously recognised. Finally the dead are more alive than the living, "haply the only living, only real." (*Pensive and Faltering.*)

"I do not think that Life provides for all . . . But I believe Heavenly Death provides for all." (*Assurances*).

"I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the non-day exhibited . . . Oh! I see how that Life cannot exhibit all to me as the day cannot—I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death." (*Night on the Prairies*) etc.

But the foundation of the faith: Identity, the solely existent eternity, never varied.

[18] Cf. Bucke: *Walt Whitman.*

(first appeared in July 1855, then a second edition in the summer of 1856) recalled to his mind the great oriental poems and to ask if he knew them, Whitman replied with a categorical "No!" and there is no reason to doubt his word. He read little, certainly very few books; he did not like libraries and men brought up upon them. To the very end of his life he does not seem to have had any curiosity to verify the similarity between his thought and that of Asia obvious to the little circle of Concord. The extreme vagueness of the expressions used every time that he introduced a glimpse of India into his Homeric enumerations is the best guarantee of his ignorance.[19]

It is then all the more interesting to discover how he could without going beyond himself—a 100% American self—all unwittingly link up with Vedantic thought. (For its kinship did not escape any of the Emerson group, beginning with Emerson himself, whose genial quip is not sufficiently famous: "Leaves of Grass seem to be a mixture of the Bhagavadgita and the New York Herald.")

The starting point with Whitman was in the profundities of his own race, in his own religious line—paradoxical though it may seem. His paternal family belonged to the Quaker Left, grouped round a free believer, Elias Hicks, to whom at the end of his life Whitman dedicated a pamphlet: He was a great religious individualist, free from all church and all *credo,* who made religion consist entirely of inner illumination, "the secret silent ecstacy." [20]

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[19] Once or twice he mentions Maya (*Calamus:* "The basis of all metaphysics), avatar *(Song of Farewell)* and nirvana *(Sands of Seventy Years: Twilight)*, but in the way of an illiterate: mist, nirvana, repose and night, forgetfulness."

The *"Passage to India"* whose title has a symbolic and quite unexpected sense, does not furnish him with anything more precise about Indian thought than the poor verse:

"Old occult Brahma, interminably far back the tender and junior Buddha. . . ."

What he says of the Hindu and of India is still poorer in *"Greeting to the World."*

The only piece whose inspiration seems to have come from an Asiatic source is in the last collection of his 72nd year: *"Goodbye my Fancy!"* (1891), *"A Persian Lesson,"* where he makes mention of Sufi. And there is no need for him to go to Persia to hear these very banal truths.

Such a moral disposition in Whitman was bound to bring about from his childhood a habit of mystic concentration, having no precise object but filtering nevertheless through all the emotions of life. The young man's peculiar genius did the rest. His nature possessed a kind of voracious receptivity, which made him not only, like ordinary men, pick from the trellis of the spectacle of the universe, some fruit of pleasure or pain, but instantaneously incorporate himself with each object that he saw. He has described this rare disposition in the admirable poem: *Autumn Rivulets.*

"There was a child went forth . . .
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years . . ."

Instinctively rather than reflectively he had reached the conclusion that the whole universe was for him not object but subject—it was he. When he wrote an account all at once in his thirties of what appeared to him his real birth, (probably about 1851-1852) it was a blinding flash, an ecstatic blow:

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[20] In a short address of May 31, 1889, the old poet, Whitman, said again: "Following the impulse of the spirit—for I am quite half of Quaker stock."

"Oh! the Joy," he said, "of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity through materials . . . My soul vibrated back to me from them. . . ." [21]

It seemed to him that he was "awake for the first time and that all that had gone before was nothing but a despicable sleep." [22]

Finally he heard some lectures or conferences of Emerson's [23] and they may have intellectualised his intuition so that it came to fruition in ideas, however imperfectly determined and connected; for with this man, always indifferent to the logic of reasoning and to metaphysical construction,[24] his whole chain of thought brought him inevitably to the present moment and to a degree of illumination that made an infinity of space and time arise from them. Hence he immediately perceived, embraced, espoused, and became at one and the same time each distinct object and their mighty totality, the unrolling and the fusion of the whole Cosmos realised in each morsel of the atom, and of life. And how does this differ from the point of ecstasy, the most intoxicated *Samadhi* of a *Bhaktiogin* who, reaching in a trice the summit of realisation, and having mastered it, comes down again to use it in all the acts and thoughts of his everyday life![25]

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[21] A Song of Joys.

[22] Camden Edition, III. 287.

[23] In 1887 Whitman denied that he had read Emerson before 1855. But in 1856 he had generously written to Emerson that the latter had been the Columbus of the "New Continent" of the soul and Whitman its inspired explorer. "It is you who have discovered these shores . . ." But the one does not cancel the other. It may be said of this discovery that it was for Emerson, like that of Columbus, the reasoned discovery of the New World, although in point of fact the ships of the Northmen had sailed along centuries before, like young Whitman, without bothering to mark its position on the map.

[24] "A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books." Song of Myself.

And the beautiful part of *Calamus:* "Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances." In this "terrible doubt" where everything reels, where no idea, no reasoning is of any avail or proves anything, nothing but the touch of a friend's hand can communicate absolute certainty: "A hold of my hand has completely satisfied me."

Here then is a typical example of the predisposition to Vedantism which existed in America well before the arrival of Vivekananda. Indeed it is a universal disposition of the human soul in all countries and in all ages, and not contained, as Indian Vedantists are inclined to believe, in a body of doctrine belonging to one country alone. On the contrary it is either helped or hindered by the chances of evolution among the different peoples and the creeds and customs whereon their own civilisations are built. It may be said that this attitude of mind is latent in all who carry within themselves a spark of the creative fire, and particularly is it true of great artists, in whom the universe is not only reflected (as in the cold glance of the medium), but incarnate. I have already mentioned in the case of Beethoven such crises of Dionysiac union with the Mother, to use one name for the hidden Being whom the heart perceives in each earth beat. Moreover, great European poetry of the XIXth century, especially that of the English poets of the age of Wordsworth and Shelley, is full of such sudden gleams. But no Western poet possessed them so strongly or so consciously as Whitman, who collected all the scattered fires into a brazier, transmuting his intuition into a faith—faith in his people, faith in the world, faith in humanity as a whole.

How strange it is that this faith was not brought face to face with Vivekananda's! Would he not have been struck by so many unexpected similarities: the sentiment, so strong in Whitman, so insistent, so persistent of the journey of his ego "through trillions" of years and incessant "incarnations."[26] Keeping the record in double column of profit and loss of each of his previous existences—the dual self wherein no one god must debase himself before the others[27]—the net of Maya which he tears asunder [28] so that through the widened meshes the illuminating face of God may shine "Thou orb of many orbs, Thou seething principle, Thou well-kept latent germ, Thou centre!" [29]—the glorious "Song of the Universal" [30] wherein fusion is realised by the harmony of antinomies—embracing all religions, all beliefs and unbeliefs and even the doubts of all the souls of the universe, which in India was the very mission delegated by Ramakrishna to his disciples [31] —his own message that "All is Truth!" [32]

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[25] The memoirs of Miss Helen Price (quoted by Bucke: *Whitman* p. 26-31) describe, as an eyewitness, the condition of ecstasy in which he composed some of his poems.

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[26] "How can the real body ever die and be buried? Of your real body—it will pass to future spheres, carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to that of death." *(Starting from Paumanok.)*

"The journey of the soul, not life alone, but death, many deaths, I wish to sing . . ."

(Debris on the Shore.)

The Song of Myself unfolds a magnificent panorama "from the summit of the summits of the staircase":—"far away at the bottom, enormous original Negation," then the march of the self, "the cycles of ages" which ferry it "from one shore to another, rowing, rowing, like cheerful boatmen"—with the certitude that whatever happens they will reach their destination!

("Whether I arrive at the end today or in a hundred thousand years or in ten millions of years.")

In the poem: *"To Think of Time."*

"Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd in you.
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes——
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded."

The Song of Prudence (In *Autumn Rivulets*) establishes according to the Hindu law of Karma that "every move affects the births to come" but unfortunately it introduces the word "business"; "investments for the future": "the only good ones are charity and personal force."

Perhaps the most striking of these songs, Faces (in the collection: *From Noon to the Starry Night*) conjures up the most abject faces like "muzzles" of a moment, which later shall be removed mesh by mesh until the glorious face is revealed!

"Do you suppose I could be content with all, if I thought them their own finale?——
I shall look again in a score or two of ages."

Finally when he was close upon death, he said: "I receive now again of my many translations, from my avatars ascending, while others doubtless await me."

(Farewell from the Songs of Parting.)

[27] "The Me myself. . . . I believe in you my soul, the other I

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am must not abase itself to you . . . and you must not be abased to the other."

(Song of Myself.)

[28] His devoted friend, O'Connor, described him as: "The man who had torn aside disguises and illusions, and restored to the commonest things their divine significance." (Cf. Bucke: W. Whitman, p. 124-5.)

[29] *"Dedication."* Might this not be culled from a Vedic hymn?

[30] "Birds of Passage."

[31] "I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths.
Enclosing worship ancient and modern cults and all
Between ancient and modern . . .
Peace be to your sceptics, despairing shades . . .
Among you I can take my place just as well as among others. . ."

(Song of Myself.)

"I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true . . ."
("With Antecedents" in *Birds of Passage.)*

In the same collection he raises the same protest as Ramakrishna against all attempt to found a theory or a new school on him:
("I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me. I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.")

(Myself and Mine.)

Finally, like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, he refused categorically to take part in politics, and showed aversion for all social action proceeding by exterior means. (Cf. the discources delivered to H. Traubel: *With Walt Whitman in Camden,* p. 103 and 216.) The only reform he sought was an inner one: "Let each man, of whatever class or situation, cultivate and enrich humanity!"

[32] In the collection: *"From Noon to the Starry Night":* All

And is it not true that they were even alike in some individual characteristics such as the high pride which compared itself to God;[33] the warrior spirit of the great Kshatriya "the enemy of repose," and that of the brother of war, fearing neither danger nor death, but calling them rather [34]—the worship rendered to the Terrible, an interpretation recalling the dark yet magnificent confidences of Vivekananda to Sister Nivedita during their dream-like pilgrimages in the Himalayas.[35]

At the same time I can see clearly what Vivekananda would have disliked in Whitman—the ridiculous mixture of the New York Herald and the Bhavadgita, which awoke the fine smile of Emerson: his metaphysi-

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is Truth. "I see that there are really . . . no lies after all . . . and that each thing exactly represents itself and what has preceded it."

[33] Nothing, not God is greater to one than one's self is . . .
I, who am curious about each, am not curious about God . . .
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself . . .
Why should I wish to see God better than this day? . . .
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass.
(Song of Myself.)
"It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great.
It is I who am great or to be great . . .
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely to you."
(By Blue Ontario's Shore.)

[34] "I am the enemy of repose and give the others like for like,
My words are made of dangerous weapons, full of death.
I am born of the same elements from which war is born."
(Drum Taps.)

[35] "I take you specially to be mine, your terrible rude forms.
(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face.)
I know not what these plots, and wars and determents are for.
I know not the fruition of success, but I know that through war and crime your work goes on."
(By Blue Ontario's Shores.)

cal journalism, his small shopkeeper's wisdom, picked up from dictionaries—his eccentric affectation of a bearded Narcissus, his colossal complacency with regard to himself and his people—his democratic Americanism, with its childish vanity and expansive vulgarity even seeking the limelight; all these must have roused the aristocratic disdain of the great Indian. Especially would Vivekananda have had no patience with the compromising coquettings of his idealism with the forbidden joys of "metaphysics," spiritualism and intercourse with spirits, etc. . . .[36]

But such differences would not have prevented this mighty lover from being drawn to Vivekananda's magnetic soul. And, in point of fact, the contact took place later, for we have proof that Vivekananda read *"Leaves of Grass,"* in India and that he called Whitman "the Sannyasin of America," [37] thus acknowledging their common parentage. Is it to be believed that he did not make this discovery until the end of his stay in America, because, during the course of it, no mention of the relationship has been published by his disciples in detail?

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[36] One of his last poems: "Continuities" (from the collection, *Sands at Seventy*) is inspired (he himself says so) by a conversation with a spirit. He had a firm belief repeated many times in the real return of the dead among the quick:

"The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks curiously on the corpse."
(To Think of the Time.)
"Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that we know not of."
(Starting from Paumanok.)

He was convinced of the distinction between "a real body" and an "excremental body":

"The corpse you will leave will be but excrementations.
(But thou) thy spiritual body, that is eternal . . . will surely escape."
(Shortly to Die) in the collection *"Whisper of Heavenly Death."*
"My self discharging my excrementitious body, to be burn'd, or render'd to powder or buried.
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres."
(A Song of Joys.)

[37] Cf. the great *Life of Vivekananda* by his disciples, Vol. III. p. 199. It was at Lahore towards the end of the year 1897, a short

Whatever the truth may be, the spirit of Whitman was there, attesting that America was ready to listen to Indian thought. It was her forerunner; the old prophet of Camden solemnly announced the arrival of India:

"To us, my city,
The Originatress comes,
The nest of languages, the Bequeather of Poems, the
race of old . . .
The race of Brahma comes."[38]

He opened his arms to the Pilgrim of India, and confided him to America, "the nave of democracy."

"The past is also stored in thee. . . .
Thou carriest great companies.
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee."[39]

It is clear then that the Indian biographers of Vivekananda have been regrettably remiss in not putting Whitman in the front rank of those whose thought did the honours of the New World to the stranger guest.

But having put him in his proper place to Vivekananda, shoulder to shoulder and even with equally broad shoulders we must be careful not to exaggerate his in-

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time after his return from America, that Vivekananda found a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in the library of one of his Indian hosts, Turtha Ram Goswami (who later went to America under the name of Swami Ramtitha, but who was then a professor of mathematics at a college in Lahore). He asked leave to take it away to read or re-read it: (it is not possible to decide which, from the words of the account, and it adds, "He used to call Whitman 'the Sannyasin of America'." But whether this judgment was prior or subsequent to that date is impossible to determine).

[38] A Broadway Pageant.

[39] "Thou, Mother with thy equal Brood."

fluence in America. This Homer of "En-Masse"[40] did not succeed in conquering the masses. The annunciator of the great destinies of Democracy in America died misunderstood and almost unnoticed by the Democrats of the New World. The singer of the "Divine average"[41] was only loved and revered by a small group of chosen artists and exceptional men—and perhaps more in England than in the United States.

But this is true of almost all real Precursors. And it does not make them any the less the true representatives of their people that their people ignore them: in them is liberated out of due time the profound energies hidden and compressed within the human masses: they announce them; sooner or later they come to light. The genius of Whitman was the index of the hidden soul sleeping—(she is not yet wide awake)—in the ocean depths of his people of the United States.

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[40] "One's Self I sing, a simple separate person.
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word: 'En-Masse.'"

These are the first words of "Inscriptions" at the beginning of the book.

"And mine (my word), a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.
A word of the faith that never balks. . . ."

(Song of Myself.)

[41] "O such themes, O divine average!" *(Starting from Paumanok.)* He announces for the future, "Liberty and the divine average."

(Journeying through Days of Peace in the collection: *From Noon to the Starry Night.)*

And his last word, his poem, *Goodbye my Fancy!* proclaims again:

"I chant the common bulk, the general horde."

V

THE PREACHING IN AMERICA

THE whole of the spiritual manifestations that I have just explained in brief (I delegate their deep study to the future historian of the new Soul of the West), will make it clear that the thought of the United States, thus fermenting and working for half a century was found more ready than any in the West to receive Vivekananda.

Hardly had he begun to preach than men and women athirst for his message came flocking to him. They came from all parts: from salons and universities, sincere and pure Christians and sincere free thinkers and agnostics. What struck Vivekananda—what strikes us still today—was the existence side by side throughout that young and old globe for ever the enigma the hope and the fear of the future, the highest and the most sinister forces; an immense thirst for truth, and an immense thirst for the false; absolute disinterestedness and an unclean worship of gold; childlike sincerity and the charlatanism of the fair. Despite sudden outbreaks of passion, to which his hotheaded character was prone, Vivekananda was great enough to keep the balance between sympathy and antipathy; he always recognised the virtues and the real energy of Anglo-Saxon America.

In point of fact, although on this soil he founded works more enduring than elsewhere in Europe, he never felt the earth so solid under his feet as he did later in England. But there was nothing great in the new America, which he did not handle with respect, which he did not try to understand, and to hold up to his compatriots as an example to be admired, such as economic policy, industrial organisation, public instruction, museums and art galleries, the progress of science, hygienic institutions and social welfare work. The blood rose to his head when he compared the magnificent efforts made with regard to the last of these by the United States and the liberality of public expenditure for the public good, to the social apathy of his own country. For although he was always ready to scourge the hard pride of the West, he was still more ready to humiliate that of India under the crushing model of Western social work.

"Ah! butchers!" he cried when he came out of a model prison for women, where the delinquents were humanely treated, as he compared the cruel indifference of the Indians towards the poor and weak, unable to help themselves . . . "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism . . . Religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees . . . hypocrites."

And so he never ceased to beseech, to stimulate, to harry the youth of India:

"Gird up your loins, my boy! I am called by the Lord to say to you . . . The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful . . . Feel for the miserable and look up for help—*it shall come.* I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help . . . The Lord . . . will help me. I may perish of cold and hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed . . .. Go . . . down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them . . . these three hundred millions, going down and down every day . . . Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle—hundreds will be ready to take it up . . . Love and faith. Life is nothing, death is nothing . . . Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our general. Do not look back to see who falls —forward—onward! . . ."

And this magnificent letter, inspired by the spectacle of the noble social philanthropy of America, ends on a note of hope, which shows that he who could scourge the Tartuffes of the Christian faith felt more than any other the breath of *Amor Caritas* animating this faith in its sincerity:

"I am here amongst the children of the Son of Mary, and the Lord Jesus will help me." [1]

No, he was never the man to trouble about religious barriers. He was later to utter this great truth: [2]

"It is well to be born into a church, but it is terrible to die there."

To the scandalised outcries of bigots—Christian or Hindu—who felt themselves called upon to guard the closed doors of their exclusive faiths so that no infidel might enter, he replied:

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[1] *Life of Vivekananda,* chap. LXXVII. Letter written at the beginning of his stay in America before the Parliament of Religions.

He translated the Imitation of Jesus Christ into Bengali and wrote a preface to it.

[2] In London (1895).

"What does it matter if they are Hindus, Mohammedans or Christians? Those who love the Lord can always count on my help. Plunge into the fire, my children . . . Everything will come to you, if you only have faith . . . Let each one of us pray day and night for the down-trodden millions in India who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny—pray day and night for them . . . I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor . . . Who feels (in India) for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out? . . . Who will bring the light to them? Let these people be your God . . . Him I call a Mahatman (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor . . . So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! . . ."[3]

And so he never forgot for a single day the primary idea of his mission, the same whose talons had gripped him as he travelled across India from the North to the South, from the South to the North between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin:—to save his people, body and soul, (the body first; bread first!) to mobilise the whole world to help him in his task by widening his appeal until it became the cause of the peoples, the cause of the poor and oppressed of the whole world. Giving, giving! Let there be no more talk of the hand stretched out for charity falling in pity from above. Equality! He who receives, gives, and gives as much as he receives, if not more. He receives life, he gives Life, he gives God. For all the ragged, the dying, the miserable people of India are God. Under the pressure of the suffering and outrage grinding down the people throughout the ages, the wine of the Eternal Spirit flows, ferments and is concentrated. Take and drink! They also can use the words of the Sacrament: *"For this is My blood."* They are the Christ of the nations.

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[3] *Ibid.* chap. LXXXIII. Letter to his Indian disciples (about 1894-1895).

And so in Vivekananda's eyes the task was a double one: to take to India the money and goods acquired by Western civilisation—to take to the West the spiritual treasures of India. A loyal exchange. A fraternal and mutual help.

It was not only the material goods of the West that he counted, but social and moral goods as well. We have just read the cry torn from him by the spirit of humanity which a great self-respecting nation felt bound to show even to those she had been obliged to condemn. He was seized with admiration and emotion by the apparent democratic equality inherent in the spectacle of a millionaire and a woman of the common people elbowing each other in the same tramway. But this self-deceived man gave it a greater significance than it deserved; for he did not realise the remorselessness of the machine, grinding down all who fell.[4] He therefore felt more poignantly the murderous inequality of the castes and the outcasts of India:

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[4] Later his eyes were opened. On his second journey to America he tore aside the mask: and the social vices and pride of race, of faith and of colour appeared in all their nakedness to choke him. He, who had said in his beautiful discourse of September 19, 1893, at the Parliament of Religions: "Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood . . ." discovered the devouring imperialism of the Dollar and was angry that he had been deceived. He said to Miss MacLeod, who repeated it to me:

"So America is just the same! So she will not be the instrument to accomplish the work, but China or Russia" (meaning: the realisation of the double allied mission of the West and the East).

"India's doom was sealed," he wrote, "the very day they invented the word MLECHCHHA (the non-Hindu, the man outside) and stopped from communion with others."

He preached the primordial necessity "of an organisation which should teach India mutual aid and understanding," after the pattern of Western democracies.[5]

Further, he admired the high intellectual attainments of so many American women and the noble use they made of their freedom. He compared their emancipation to the seclusion of Indian women, and the memory of the hidden sufferings of one of his dead sisters made it a labour of love for him to work for their emancipation.[6]

No racial pride was allowed to prevent him from stating the social superiority of the West in so many points;[7] for he wished his people to profit from it.

But his pride would accept nothing except on the basis of equal return. He was keenly aware that he carried to the Western world, caught in the snare of its own demon of action and practical reason (he would have said: of physical reason), freedom through the spirit, the key of God contained in man and possessed by even the most destitute of Indians. The belief in man, which he found so highly developed in young

[5] Letter quoted (1894-1895).

[6] During his second journey part of the money earned by his lectures was sent to a foundation of Hindu widows at Baranagore. And soon the idea took shape in his mind of sending to India Western teachers devoted to the formation of a new intellectual generation of Hindu women.

[7] "In spirituality the Americans are very inferior to us. But their society is very superior to ours." (Letter to his disciples at Madras.)

America was for him only the first step, the point of attack. Far from wishing to lessen it, as is the case with some European Christianity, his energy recognised in it a younger sister of good birth but so blinded by the new sun, that she walked blindly with rash and precipitate steps along the edge of the abyss. He believed that he was called upon to endow her with sight, to guide her to the beyond, the terrace of life from whence she could see God.

* * *

In America therefore he undertook a series of apostolic campaigns with the object of spreading over this immense spiritual stretch of fallow land the Vedantic seed and waking it with Ramakrishna's rain of love. From the former he himself was to select such parts as were appropriate to the American public on account of their logical reasoning. He had avoided all mention of the latter, his Master, although he had preached his word. This omission was due to the modesty of passionate love, and even when he decided to speak directly of him to several very intimate disciples,[8] he forbade them to make this touching action of grace public.

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[8] It was in June, 1895, at the Park of the Thousand Isles, on the river St. Lawrence, that he seems to have revealed for the first time in America to a group of chosen hearers the existence of Ramakrishna. And it was in February 24, 1896, at New York that he finished a series of lectures by his beautiful discourse: *My Master.* Even then he refused to publish it; and when on his return to India surprise was expressed at his refusal, he replied with burning humility:

"I did not allow it to be published as I have done injustice to my Master. My Master never condemned anything or anybody. But while I was speaking of him I criticised the American people for their dollar-worshipping spirit. That day I learnt the lesson that I am not yet fit to talk of him."

(Reminiscences of a disciple, published in the *Vedanta Kesari* of January-February, 1923.)

He quickly shook himself free from Yankee lecturing organisations with their fixed itineraries drawn up by managers who exploited and embarrassed him by beating the big drum as if he were a circus turn.[9] It was at Detroit where he stayed for six weeks that he threw off the insufferable yoke of such binding engagements. He besought his friends to have the contract cancelled, though at considerable pecuniary loss.[10] It was at Detroit too that he met her who, of all his Western disciples, was to be with Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) the closest to his thought: she who took the name of Sister Christine (Miss Greenstidel).

From Detroit he returned to New York at the beginning of the winter, 1894. He was at first monopolised by a group of rich friends, who were much more interested in him as the man of the day than in his message. But he could not bear much restraint. He wanted to be alone and his own master. He was tired of this kind of steeple-chase which allowed nothing lasting to be founded; he decided to form a band of disciples and to start a free course. Rich friends with their offers to "finance" him made intolerable conditions: they would have forced him to meet only an exclusive society of "the right people." He was transported with rage and cried:

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[9] I have in my hands an advertising prospectus, in which the headlines announce him in large letters to the passers by as "One of the Giants of the Platform." His portrait is included with four inscriptions proclaiming at the four cardinal points that he is: "An Orator by Divine Right; A Model Representative of his Race; A Perfect Master of the English Language; the Sensation of the World's Fair Parliament." The Announcement does not fail to enumerate his moral and physical advantages, especially his physical, his bearing, his height, the colour of his skin and clothing—with attestations from those who had seen him, heard him and tried him. So might an elephant or a patent medicine have been described.

[10] From that time he went alone from town to town, at the invitation of such or such a society, giving sometimes as many as 12 or 14 lectures in a week. At the end of a year he had visited all the important towns from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi.

"Shiva! Shiva! Has it ever happened that a great work has been grown by the rich! It is the brain and the heart that creates and not the purse. . . ."[11]

Several devoted and comparatively poor students undertook the financial responsibility of the work. In an "undesirable" quarter some sordid rooms were rented. They were unfurnished. One sat where one could—Vivekananda on the floor, ten or twelve standing up. Then it was necessary to open the door leading to the staircase: people were piled up on the steps and landing. Soon he had to think about moving into larger quarters. His first course lasted from February to June 1895,[12] and in it he explained the Upanishads. Every day he instructed several chosen disciples in the exercise of the double method of *rajayoga* and *jnanayoga*—the first more especially psycho-physiological, aiming at intense concentration through control of the vital energies, by the subordination of the organism to the mind, by silence imposed on the agitation of inner currents so that nothing but the clear voice of the Being[13] might make itself heard—the second, purely intellectual, and akin to scientific reason, seeking the unification of the spirit with the Universal Law, the Absolute Reality: the Science-Religion.

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[11] Sister Christine: *Unpublished Memoirs.*

[12] At the same time he gave another series of public lectures on Hindu religion to the *Ethical Association* of Brooklyn. The proceeds enabled him to pay the expenses of his private classes.

[13] India has never had the monopoly of such inner discipline. The great Christian mystics of the West both knew and practised it. Vivekananda was aware of this fact and often invoked their example. But India alone has made of the practise a precise science determined by centuries of experiment and open to all without distinction of creed.

Before June 1895 he had finished writing his famous treatise on *Rajayoga,* dictated to Miss S. E. Waldo (later Sister Haridas), which was to attract the attention of American physiologists, like William James, and later to rouse the enthusiasm of Tolstoy.[14] In the second part of my book I shall speak again of this mystic method, as well as of the other chief *yogas.* It is to be feared that this, with its more physiological character, only exercised the great attraction it had in America, because she took it in its most practical sense, as promising material power. A giant with the brain of a child, this people is only interested as a rule in ideas which she can turn to her advantage. Metaphysics and religion are transmuted into false applied sciences, their object being the attainment of power, riches and health —the kingdom of this world. Nothing could hurt Vivekananda more deeply. For all Hindu masters of true spirituality, spirituality is an end in itself, their sole object is to realise it; they cannot forgive those who subordinate its pursuit to the acquisition of all kinds of power over material means! Vivekananda was particularly bitter in his condemnation of what to him was the unpardonable sin. But perhaps it would have been better "Not to tempt the devil" so to speak but to have led American intelligence into other paths at first. He probably realised it himself; for during the following winter his lessons were concerned with other *yoga*. At this time he was still at the experimental stage. The young master was testing his power over men of another race; and he had not yet decided on the way he ought to exercise that power.

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[14] Cf. in the most recent editions of my *Life of Tolstoy,* the additional chapter: *The Reply of Asia to Tolstoy.* Tolstoy came to know Vivekananda's *Rajayoga* in the New York edition of 1896, as well as a work dedicated by Vivekananda to Ramakrishna in a posthumous edition of 1905, Madras.

It was in the period immediately after (June-July 1895) during the summer weeks spent among a chosen band of devoted souls at the Thousand Islands Park, that Vivekananda definitely decided, according to the evidence of Sister Christine, on his plan of action.[15] On a hill near a forest above the river St. Lawrence on an estate placed generously at the Master's disposal for his exposition of the Vedanta, a dozen chosen disciples were gathered together. He opened his meditations by a reading from the Gospel according to St. John. And for seven weeks, not only did he explain the sacred books of India but (a more important education from his point of view) he sought to awaken the heroic energy of the souls placed in his hands: "liberty," "courage," "chastity," "the sin of self-deprecation," etc. Such were some of the themes of his Interviews.

"Individuality is my motto," he wrote to Abhayananda, "I have no ambition beyond training 'individuals.' "[16] He said again:

"If I succeed in my life to help one single man to attain freedom, my labours will not have been in vain."

Following the intuitive method of Ramakrishna, he never spoke above the heads of his listeners to the vague entity called 'the Public' by most orators and preachers; He seemed to address each one separately. For, as he said, "one single man contains within himself the whole universe."[17] The nucleus of the Cosmos is in each individual. Mighty founder of an Order though he was, he remained essentially a sannyasin to the end,[18] and he wished to give birth to sannyasins, free men of God. And so his conscious and definite object in America was to free certain chosen souls and to make them in their turn the sowers of liberty.

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[15] For this vital period at the Thousand Islands Park the *Unpublished Memoirs* of Sister Christine provide information of the greatest importance.

[16] Autumn, 1895.

During the summer of 1895 several Western disciples responded to his call; and he initiated several of them.[19]

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[17] In 1890 at the beginning of his wanderings in India he had gone into an ecstasy under a banyan at the edge of a stream where the identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm and the whole universe contained in an atom had appeared to him.

[18] Ceaselessly he was consumed with a burning desire for the free life. "I long, oh I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees, and my food from begging . . ." (January, 1895.)

His beautiful Song of the Sannyasin dates from the middle of this year, 1895.

[19] Sister Christine has left us portraits, not without humour, of the personalities of these first American disciples, disappointing, as was only to be expected, though some of them turned out to be. Particularly noteworthy are—the tumultuous Marie-Louise (who took the name of Abhayananda) a naturalised Frenchwoman well known in Socialist circles: the complex and tormented Leon Lamsberg (Kripananda) a Russian Jew by birth, a very intelligent New York journalist: Stella, an old actress, who sought in the Rajayoga the fountain of youth; the excellent little old man, Dr. Wight with his sweet and modest Antigone, Miss Ruth Ellis, both athirst for spirituality. Then there were his disciples and friends of the first rank: Miss S. E. Waldo of Brooklyn (later Sister Haridasi) who has preserved for us in writing Vivekananda's first lecture cycle and to whom he accorded (in spring 1896) the privilege of instruction in the theory and practise of Rajayoga: Mrs. Ole Bull, the wife of a celebrated Norwegian artist, a friend of Andersen, who was one of the most generous donors to Vivekananda's work: Miss Josephine MacLeod to whose reminiscences I owe so much: Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggatt of New York: Prof. Wright of Harvard, the providential friend of Vivekananda's arrival in America.

Finally comes the one who was nearest to his heart, the quiet Mary at the feet of her Messiah—Miss Greenstidel (Sister Chris-

But they proved themselves later to be of very different calibres. Vivekananda does not appear to have possessed the eagle glance of Ramakrishna, who, at sight infallibly plunged into the depths of passing souls, unveiling their past as well as their future, seeing them naked. The Swami gathered chaff and wheat in his wake—content to let the morrow winnow the grain and scatter the chaff to the winds. But among their number he selected some devoted disciples, the greatest prize, with the exception of Sister Christine, being the young Englishman, J. Goodwin, who gave him his whole life: from the end of 1895 he was Vivekananda's self-appointed secretary, his right hand the Master called him, and it is especially to him that we owe the preservation of the seed sown in America.

His stay in the United States was broken from August to December 1895 by a visit to England of which I shall speak later. It was resumed in the winter and lasted until the middle of April 1896. He carried on his Vedantic instruction by two series of lectures and by private classes in New York; the first in December '95 on the *Karmayoga* (the way of God through work), whose exposition is supposed to be his master piece, the second in February '96 on *Bhaktiyoga* (the Way of Love).

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tine), who gathered and treasured within herself the spirit of the Master, as it was poured out in audible monologues.

At Grenaker on the coast of Maine for several days he soliloquised in front of Christine without seeming to notice her presence, searching for the path and examining all the problems of his life point by point from different angles. And at the end, when she softly expressed her wonder at the contradictory judgments he had expressed, he said: "Don't you understand? I was thinking aloud."

For Vivekananda, for his own satisfaction, needed to put his own inner debates into words.

He spoke in all kinds of places in New York, Boston and Detroit, before popular audiences, before the Metaphysical Society of Hartford, before the Ethical Society of Brooklyn, and before students and professors of philosophy at Harvard.[20] At Harvard he was offered the Chair of Oriental Philosophy, at Columbia the Chair of Sanskrit. At New York under the presidency of Sir Francis Leggatt he organised the Vedanta Society, which was to become the centre of the Vedantist movement in America.

His motto was: tolerance and religious universalism. The three years of travel in the New World, the perpetual contact with the thought and faith of the West, had ripened his ideal of an universal religion. But in return his Hindu intelligence had received a shock. He felt the necessity of a complete and thorough reorganisation of the great religious and philosophical thought of India if it was to recover its conquering force and power to advance and penetrate and fertilise the West—a view he had already stated in Madras in 1893.[21] Its jungle of ideas and interlaced forms required to be put in order and its great systems classified round several stable pivots of the universal spirit. The apparently contradictory conceptions in Indian metaphysics, (the Absolute Unity of Advaitism, "qualified" Unity or Unity and Duality) which clashed even in the Upanishads, needed to be reconciled and the bridge built to join them to the conceptions of Western metaphysics by the establishment of a table of comparison destined to set forth all the points of relationship between the profound views of the oldest Himalayan philosophy and the principles admitted by modern science. He himself wished to write this *Maximum Testamentum,* this Universal Gospel, and he urged his Indian disciples to help him in the choice of the necessary materials for this reconstruction. He maintained that it was a case of translating Hindu thought into European language, to "make out of Philosophy and intricate Mythology and queer startling Psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds." [22]

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[20] Of particular importance was the lecture he gave at Harvard on "The Philosophy of the Vedanta" and the discussion that followed it. (March 25, 1896.)

[21] "The time has come for the propaganda of the faith . . . The Hinduism of the Rishis must become dynamic . . ." After having concentrated on itself for centuries it must come out of itself.

That such an enterprise was not without the risk of changing the authentic design of the age-old tapestry, might easily be said—and was said—by orthodox Hindus and European Indianists. But Vivekananda did not believe them. He claimed on the contrary that so the great lines covered by embroideries falsifying their truth, the original and profound essence, would be cleared, and he expressed this view on many occasions.[23]

Moreover, for a spirit such as his, religion can never be fixed for ever in certain texts, under whatever form they may appear. It progressed. If it stopped for a single instant it died. His universalist ideal was always in motion. It was to be fertilised by the constant union of the East and the West, neither of them fixed in one doctrine or one point of time, but both living and advancing. And one of the objects of the Vedanta Society was to watch that a continual interchange of men and ideas took place so that the circulation of the blood of thought should be regular and bathe the entire body of humanity.

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[22] "The Abstract Advaita must become living—poetic in everyday life; out of the hopelessly intricate Mythology, must come concrete moral forms, and out of bewildering yogism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology."

[23] But I must add that when he returned to India he felt anew too forcibly the beauty and the living verity of the mythological forms of his people to sacrifice them to any preconceived idea of a radical simplification for which he had been perhaps disposed in America under the direct pressure of the Western spirit. The problem thence forward was how to harmonise everything without renouncing anything.

VI

THE MEETING OF INDIA AND EUROPE

UNDER the dry and brilliant sky of New York, with its electric atmosphere, Vivekananda's genius for action burned like a torch in the midst of a world of frenzied activity, and consumed him. His expenditure of power in thought, writing, and impassioned speech, dangerously compromised his health. When he came out of the crowds into whom he had infused his enlightened spirit,[1] he longed for nothing but "a corner apart and to stay there to die." His brief life, already wasted by the illness to which he succumbed, was further shortened by the agony of such over-strain. He never recovered from it,[2] and it was about this time that he felt the approach of death. He actually said:

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[1] All witnesses agree in attesting to his crushing expenditure of force, which at these meetings was communicated to the public like an electric charge. Some hearers came out exhausted and had to rest for several days as from a nervous shock. Sister Christine said: "His power was sometimes overwhelming." He was called the "Lightning Orator." In his last session in America he gave as many as 17 lectures in a week, and private classes twice a day and his was no case of abstract and prepared dissertation. Every thought was passion, every word was faith. Every lecture was a torrential improvisation.

[2] The first symptoms of diabetes (of which he died before his fortieth year) appeared during his adolescence when he was 17 or 18.

He also had suffered in India from numerous and violent attacks of malaria. He had almost died of diphtheria contracted on one of his pilgrimages. During the great journey of two years

"My day is done."

But the great game and his heroic mission always called him back.

It was thought that a journey to Europe would distract him, but wherever he went he always spent himself. He stayed three times in England,[3] from September 10 to the end of November, 1895, from April to the end of July, 1896, from October to December 16, 1896.

The impression it made on him was even deeper than that made by America and much more unexpected. Certainly he had nothing to complain of in the latter; for despite antipathies that he came up against and the Vanity Fair he was obliged to avoid, he had found there the most delicate sympathy,[4] the most devoted helpers and a still virgin soil crying aloud to be sown.

But from the moment that he set foot in the Old World he breathed a quite different atmosphere of intellectuality. Here was no longer the empty and barbarous aspiration of a young people to overestimate the will, which made it fling itself on the *yoga of* energy—the *Rajayoga,* in order to demand of it, even while they deformed it, infantile and unhealthy secrets for the

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through India he had abused his powers, making excessive journeys, half naked and under-fed; it had happened several times that he had fallen fainting for want of food. Then was superimposed the overwork in America.

[3] He came through Paris in August, 1895, before going to London. But he only gave it a brief glance this first time (visiting museums, cathedrals, the tomb of Napoleon), and his dominant impression was of an artistic people, admirably gifted. He was to see France more at leisure five years later, from July to December, 1900. We shall return to this subject again.

[4] One of its expressions which touched him most was towards the end of 1894 at the close of a lecture on the ideas of Indian women, wherein he had rendered pious homage to his mother—a letter sent to his mother at Christmas by the ladies of Boston.

conquest of the world. Here the labour of a thousand years of thought was to go direct in the teachings of India to that which for Vivekananda, the Advaitist was also the essential: to the methods of Knowledge, to the *Jnanayoga.* Hence in explaining it he could start above the primary class; for Europe was capable of judging it with science and surety.

Although in the United States Vivekananda had met with certain intellectuals of mark, such as Professor Wright, the philosopher William James,[5] and the great electrician Nicolas Tesla,[6] who had shown a sympathetic interest [7] in him, they were in general novices on the field of Hindu metaphysical speculation with everything to learn, like the students of philosophy at Harvard.

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[5] It was Mrs. Ole Bull who brought Vivekananda and William James together. The latter invited the young Swami to visit him and followed with close attention his teaching on *Rajayoga.* It is said that he practised it.

Vivekananda's disciples tend to believe that their Master exercised an influence over William James. They quote certain passages of American philosophy (Pragmatism), recognising in Vedantism the most logical and extreme of the monist systems, and in Vivekananda the most representative of the Vedantist missionaries. But that does not mean that William James had adopted these doctrines himself. He was and always remained an observer. Although mediocrely endowed for "religious experience" (he acknowledges it frankly) he nevertheless has devoted a famous book (a) to it. And there is no doubt that Vivekananda contributed indirectly to the birth of that book. But James only quotes him by virtue of example among many others in his chapter X on *Mysticism,* then twice in the midst of the Indian mystics (quotation from the *Rajayoga*), and lastly at the conclusion of all the witnesses of mysticism drawn from all countries and all times, thus rendering him just homage. *(Practical Vedanta* and the *Real and the Apparent Man.)*

It does not seem however that James drew as much as he might have done from the Swami's experiences, nor that the latter discovered to him the source of his thought, Ramakrishna. James quotes him in passing, carelessly: from Max Müller's little book. The importance of James' book is that it seems to be at the crossroads, where gaps were being made by mightly assaults on all sides in the scientific positivism of the last years of the XIXth century, so naively sure of itself; the Subconscious of Myers, the Relativity which was being rough hewn, Christian Science, the Vedantism of Vivekananda. The turning point of Western thought had come, the eve of the discovery of new continents.

In Europe Vivekananda was to measure himself against the masters of Indology, such as Max Műller and Paul Deussen. The greatness of philosophical and philological science in the West was revealed to him in all its patient genius and scrupulous honesty. He was touched to the depths by it and rendered to his people in India, quite ignorant of it, as he himself had been up to that time a more beautiful witness of love and veneration for it than any other has done.

But the discovery of England reserved for him an emotion of quite a different order. He came as an enemy. And he was conquered. On his return to India with superb loyalty he was to proclaim it:

"No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English

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Vivekananda played his definite part in the great assault. But others even in the West had preceded him. And I think that the previous researches of Professor Starbuck in California (the Psychology of Religion) and his considerable collection of religious witness had inspired William James with the idea of his book rather than his knowledge of the Indian Swami.

(a). The original work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* appeared in New York, June 1902. James therein reproduced two series of lectures given in 1901 and 1902 in Edinburgh.

[6] Nicolas Tesla was especially struck in Vivekananda's teaching by the cosmogonic *Samkhya* theory and its relation to the modern theories of matter and force. We shall return to this point.

[7] Vivekananda also met in New York the highest representatives of Western science: Sir William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) and Prof. Helmholtz. But they were Europeans whom the chance of an Electricity Congress had brought to America.

. . . There is none among you . . . who loves the English people more than I do now . . ."

And in a letter from England to an American disciple (October 8, 1896):

"My ideas about the English have been revolutionised."[8]

He discovered "a nation of heroes: the true Kshatriyas! . . . brave and steady . . . Their education is to hide their feelings and never to show them. But with all this heroic superstructure there is a deep spring of feeling in the English heart. If you once knew how to reach it, he is your friend for ever. If he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out; and the immense practicality and energy of the race makes it sprout up and immediately bear fruit . . . They have solved the secret of obedience without slavish cringing—great freedom with great law-abidingness."[9]

A race worthy of envy! She forces even those whom she oppresses to respect her. Even those who are the burning consciences of a subjected people and who wish to free it—the Ram Mohun Roys, the Vivekanandas, the Tagores, the Gandhis—are obliged to recognise the greatness of the victor, the legitimacy of the victory and perhaps even the utility of loyal collaboration with her. In any case if they had to change their conquerors they would not choose any other. With all the monstrous abuses of her domination she seems the one nation of all the West (and I include the whole of

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[8] He also said with a touch of irony:

"I think I am beginning to see the Divine even inside the high and mighty Anglo-Indians. I think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very 'Devil' himself if there were any." (July 6, 1896.)

[9] I have composed this paragraph from extracts of the letter of 1896 and a famous lecture in Calcutta.

Europe and America in that term) to offer the greatest scope for the free development of Indian ideas.

But while he admired her, Vivekananda never lost sight of his Indian mission. He meant to make use of England's greatness in order to realise the spiritual empire of India. He was to write:[10]

"The British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine and they will spread all over the world . . . Spiritual ideas have always come from the downtrodden (Jews and Greeks)."

During his first journey to London he was able to write to a disciple in Madras:

"In England my work is really splendid."

His success had been immediate. The Press expressed great admiration for him. The moral figure of Vivekananda was compared to those of the highest religious apparitions—not only to those of his Indian forerunners, Ram Mohun Roy and Keshab, but to Buddha and to Christ.[11] He was well received in aristocratic circles; and even the heads of the Church showed their sympathy for him.

During his second visit he opened regular classes of Vedantic instruction; and, certain of an intelligent public, he started with the *yoga* of mind: the *Jnana-yoga.*[12] He gave in addition several courses of lectures in the Piccadilly Picture Gallery, at Princes' Hall, in clubs, to educational societies, at Annie Besant's house, to private circles. He felt the seriousness of his English hearers, in contrast to the superficial infatuation of the American public. Less brilliant, more conservative, than the Americans, the English at first reserved their adherence; but when they gave it did not give it by halves. Vivekananda felt more at his ease and trusted them more. He spoke of him whom he had always been careful to veil from profane eyes—of his beloved Master, Ramakrishna. He said with passionate humility that "all he was himself came from that single source . . . that he had not one infinitesimal thought of his own to unfold . . ." And he proclaimed him as "the spring of this phase of the earth's religious life."

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[10] To Sir Francis Leggatt, July 6, 1896.

[11] *Standard, London Daily Chronicle.* Cf. also the interview that appeared in the *Westminster Gazette.*

[12] Five classes a week and on Friday evenings—in addition a class for open discussion.

It was Ramakrishna who brought him into contact with Max Műller. The old Indian scholar, whose young regard followed with an ever fresh curiosity all the palpitations of the Hindu religious soul, had already perceived, like the Magi of old in the East, the rising star of Ramakrishna.[13] He was eager to question a direct witness of the new Incarnation; and it was at his request that Vivekananda indited his memories of the Master, afterwards used by Max Műller in his little book on Ramakrishna.[14] Vivekananda was no less attracted by the Mage of Oxford, who, from his distant observatory, had announced the passage of the great swan [15] through the Bengal sky. He was invited to his house on May 28, 1896; and the young Swami of India bowed before the old sage of Europe, and hailed him as a spirit of his race, the reincarnation of an ancient

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[13] In an article in the 19th Century. "Ramakrishna, a true Mahatman."

[14] Vivekananda asked Saradananda to collect data concerning Ramakrishna.

[15] "Paramahamsa."

Rishi, recalling his first births in the ancient days of Vedic India—"a soul that is every day realising its oneness with Brahman. . . ."[16]

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And England was to give him still more in the shape of perhaps the most beautiful friendships of his life: J. J. Goodwin, Margaret Noble, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier.

I have already mentioned the first of them. He met him at the end of '95 in New York. A good stenographer was wanted to take down exactly the lessons of the Swami; and it was not easy to find one of sufficient education. Young Goodwin was engaged immediately after his arrival from England. He was on trial for a week, and before it was over, enlightened by the thought he was transcribing, he left all to devote himself to the Master. He refused pay, worked night and day, accompanied Vivekananda wherever he went and watched over him tenderly. He took the vow of *Brahmacharya.* He gave his life to the Master, in the complete sense of the word: for he was to die prematurely[17] in India, whither he followed the man who had become his family, his country, and to whose faith he had given his passionate adherence.

Margaret Noble made no less complete a gift of herself. The future will always unite her name of initiation, Sister Nivedita, to that of her beloved Master . . . as St. Claire is to St. Francis . . . (although of a truth the imperious Swami was far from possessing the meekness of the *Poverello,* and submitted those who gave themselves to him to heart-searching tests before he accepted them.[18]) She was the young headmistress of a school in London. Vivekananda spoke at her school, and she was immediately captivated by his charm.[19] But for a long time she struggled against it. She was one of those who came to Vivekananda after each lecture with the words:

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[16] For his enthusiasm he wrote at once on June 6, 1896, for the *Brahmavadin* his Indian journal:

"I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland! . . . He has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more . . . It has coloured his whole being . . . He has caught the real soul of the melody of the Vedanta . . . . The jeweller alone can understand the worth of jewels. . . ."

[17] June 2, 1898.

"Yes, Swami . . . *But* . . ."

She argued and resisted being one of those English souls who are hard to overcome, but once conquered, faithful for ever. Vivekananda said himself:

"There are no more trustworthy souls!"

She was twenty-eight when she made up her mind to place her fate in the Swami's hands. He made her come to India [20] to devote herself to the education of

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[18] But her love was so deep that Nivedita does not seem to have kept any memory of the harshness from which she had suffered to the point of the greatest dejection. She only kept the memory of his sweetness. Miss MacLeod tells us:

"I said to Nivedita: 'He was all energy': she replied, 'He was all tenderness.' But I replied, 'I never felt it.' 'That was because it was not shown to you.' For he was to each person according to the nature of each person and his way to the Divine."

[19] She delicately evoked the memory of their first meeting:

"The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November and the place a West End drawing room . . . He was seated facing a half circle of listeners with the fire on the hearth behind him. Twilight passed into darkness . . . He sat amongst us . . . as one bringing us news from a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again, 'Shiva! Shiva!' and wearing a look of mingled gentleness and loftiness . . . (Nivedita compared his look to that of the child in the Sistine Madonna) . . . He chanted for us Sanskrit verses and Nivedita listened to him, thinking of beautiful Gregorian chants.

[20] The end of January 1898.

Hindu women;[21] and he forced her to become a Hindu "to Hinduise her thoughts, her conceptions, her habits, and to forget even the memory of her own past." She took the vow of *Brahmacharya* and was the first Western woman to be received into an Indian monastic order. We shall find her again at Vivekananda's side and she has preserved his Interviews,[22] and done more than anyone else to popularise his figure in the West.

The friendship of the Seviers was also marked by the same love and absolute confidence, that gives itself once and for ever. Mr. Sevier was a former sea captain of forty-nine. Both he and his wife were pre-occupied by religious questions, and were struck by the thought, words, and personality of Vivekananda. Miss MacLeod told me:

"Coming out of one of his lectures Mr. Sevier asked me, 'You know this young man?' 'Is he what he seems?' 'Yes.' 'In that case one must follow him and with him find God.' He went and said to his wife, 'Will you let me become the Swami's disciple?' She replied, 'Yes.' She asked him, 'Will you let me become the Swami's disciple?' He replied with affectionate humour, 'I don't know. . . .'"

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[21] Miss Henrietta Muller also.

[22] *Notes of some wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda,* by Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Calcutta, Udbodhan Office.

The chief work dedicated by Nivedita to her Master is: *The Master as I saw him, being pages from the life of the Swami Vivekananda by his disciple Nivedita.* Longmans, Green and Co. London and New York, 1910.

Nivedita has written many works to popularize in the West the religious thought, the myths, the legends and the social life of India. Several have won a well merited fame. *The Web of Indian Life; Kali the Mother; Cradle Tales of Hinduism* (charming tales of Hindu mythology presented in a poetic and popular form); *Myths of the Indo-Aryan Race,* etc.

They became his companions, having realised the whole of their small fortune. But Vivekananda was more anxious for the future of his old friends than they were for themselves, and would not allow them to give all to his work, forcing them to keep part for themselves. They looked upon the Swami as their own child, and devoted themselves, as we shall see, to the building of the Advaita Ashram of which he had dreamed in the Himalayas for meditation on the impersonal God: for it was Advaitism that had especially attracted them in the thought of Vivekananda; and for him also it was the essential. Mr. Sevier was to die in 1901 in this monastery that he had built. Mrs. Sevier survived him as well as Vivekananda. For fifteen years she remained the only European woman in this remote spot at the foot of mountains inaccessible for long months of the year, busying herself with the education of children.

"And do you not get bored?" Miss MacLeod asked her.

"I think of him," (Vivekananda) she replied simply.

"Such admirable friends have not been offered by England to Vivekananda alone of Indians. Great Hindus have always found among the English their most valiant and faithful disciples and helpers. What a Pearson is to Tagore, and an Andrews or 'Miraben' to Gandhi is well known . . ." Later when free India reckons up all she has suffered from the British Empire and what she owes to it, such holy friendships will more than anything else make the balance hesitate, heavy as it is with iniquities.

But in this land where his word roused such deep reverberations, he did not attempt to found anything, as he did in the United States, where the Ramakrishna

Mission was to grow and multiply. It is believable that the explanation of one of his American disciples is true, that he felt obliged to take into account the high intellectuality of England and Europe which required Hindu missionaries of a spiritual quality rare among the brethren of Baranagore.[23] But perhaps the terrible fatigue which began to weigh on him at times must be taken into account. He was tired of the world and the bondage of works. He longed for rest. The evil that consumed the walls of his body secretly, like the taredo worm, made him for long periods quite detached from existence. At such moments he refused to construct anything new, declaring that he was no organiser. He wrote on August 23, 1896:[24]

"I have begun the work; let others work it out! So you see, to set the work going I had to touch money and property for a time.[25] Now I am sure my part of the work is done, and I have no more interest in Vedanta, or any philosophy in the world or the work itself . . . even its religious utility is beginning to pall me . . . I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, the world."

A pathetic cry, whose poignancy will be felt by all who know the terrible exhaustion of the disease that was wasting him! At other times, on the contrary, it showed itself in too great exaltation: the whole universe seemed to him the exhilarating toy of a child God, devoid of reason.[26] But detachment was there just the same in joy or sorrow. The world was leaving him. The thread of the kite was breaking.[27]

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[23] One of them, notwithstanding, Saradananda, whom he sent for to London (April 1896) and later to America, had a solid philosophic brain, able to meet European metaphysicians on terms of equality. Abhedananda, too, who succeeded him in London (October 1896) was very well received.

[24] From Lucerne.

[25] For where money was concerned he shared the physical repulsion of Ramakrishna.

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The affectionate friends who were watching over him took him again for a rest to Switzerland. He spent most of the summer of 1896 there,[28] and he seems to have benefited greatly in enjoyment of the air from the snows, the torrents, and mountains, which reminded him of the Himalayas.[29] It was there in a village at the foot of the Alps, between Mont Blanc and the Great St. Bernard, that he first conceived the plan of founding in the Himalayas a monastery where his Western and Eastern disciples might unite. And the Seviers, who were with him, never let the idea lapse: it became their life work.

In his mountain retreat there came a letter from Prof. Paul Deussen inviting him to visit him at Kiel.

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[26] Cf. the letter of July 6, 1896, to Sir Francis Leggatt, which ends in an outpouring of delirious joy:

"I bless the day I was born. He (the Beloved) is my playful darling, I am his playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe! What reason binds Him? He the playful one is playing these tears and laughters over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun . . . A school of romping children let out to play in this play-ground of the world! Whom to praise, whom to blame? . . . He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping . . . I have learnt a thing or two. Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the 'Love,' the 'Beloved.' Aye, 'Sake,' fill up the cup and we will be mad."

[27] Cf. the parable of Ramakrishna, quoted in the first volume.

[28] At Geneva, Montreux, Chillon, Chamonix, the St. Bernard, Lucerne, the Rigi, Zermatt, Schaffhausen.

[29] He claimed to discover in Swiss peasant life and its manners and customs, resemblances to the mountaineers of Northern India.

To see him he shortened his stay in Switzerland and took the student path through Heidelberg, Coblenz, Cologne, Berlin: for he wished to have a glimpse at least of Germany, and her material power and great culture impressed him. I have already described in the *Jahrbuch* of the *Schopenhauer Gesellschaft* [30] his visit to Kiel to the founder of the Schopenhauer Society. His reception was as cordial and their relations as animated as might have been expected from such an impassioned Vedantist as Paul Deussen, who saw in the Vedanta not only "one of the most majestic structures and valuable products of the genius of man in his search for truth," but "the strongest support of pure morality, and the greatest consolation in the sufferings of life and death." [31]

But if Deussen was sensible to his personal charm, his spiritual gifts, and the deep knowledge of the Swami, the notes in his Journal do not show that he foresaw the great destiny of his young visitor. In particular he was far from imagining the tragic seriousness at the bottom of this man outwardly of robust and joyous appearance, but whose heart was obsessed by his miserable people, and whose flesh was already marked by death. He saw him in an hour of relaxation and grateful abandon, happy in the presence of the German savant and sage who had done so much for the cause of India. This gratitude never faded from Vivekananda's mind, and he kept a shining remembrance of his days at Kiel, as well as of those at Hamburg, Amsterdam and London, when Deussen was his companion.[32] Their reflection is preserved in a magnificent article in the *Brahmavadin* wherein Vivekananda later reminded his disciples of India's debt to great Europeans, who had known how to love and understand her better than she knew herself . . . especially to the two greatest, Max Műller and Paul Deussen.[33]

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[30] 1927. According to the memoirs of Mr. Sevier and the notes collected in the great Life of *Vivekananda*.

[31] Lecture given at Bombay on February 25, 1893, before the Indian branch of the *Royal Atlantic Society*. He reminded Vivekananda of these words.

He spent another two months in England, seeing Max Műller again, meeting Edward Carpenter, Frederick Myers, and Chinese Wilberforce, and delivering a fresh course of lectures on the Vedanta, on the Hindu theory of *Maya* and on the *Advaita*.[34] But his stay in Europe was drawing to a close. The voice of India was calling him back. Homesickness attacked him, and the exhausted man, who three weeks before had refused with the fury of despair to forge fresh chains[35] for himself and declared that he only desired to escape from the infernal treadmill of life and action, flung himself passionately into it, and harnessed himself with his own hands again to the mill. For as he said to his English friends, when he was taking leave of them:

[32] Sevier says that Deussen rejoined Vivekananda at Hamburg, that they travelled together in Holland, spent three days at Amsterdam, then went to London, where for two weeks they met every day. During the same time Vivekananda saw Max Müller again at Oxford. "Thus three great minds were conversing with each other."

[33] See Appendix, Note III.

[34] It is noteworthy that the last lecture, the final word, was consecrated to the Advaita Vedanta (December 10, 1896): the essential thought.

[35] "I have given up the bondage of iron, the family tie . . . I am not to take up the golden chain of religious brotherhood. I am free, I must always be free, free as the air. As for me I am as good as retired. I have played my part in the world . . ."

This was written on August 23, 1896, at Lucerne at the moment when he had been rescued from the whirlwind of action, in which he had almost gone down breathless. The Swiss air had not yet had time to reinvigorate him.

"It may be that I shall find it good to come out of this body and throw it on one side like a worn out garment. But I shall never stop helping humanity . . ."

To work, to serve in this life, in the lives to come, to be reborn, ever reborn to serve . . . Yes, a Vivekananda is obliged to "return to this hell!" For his whole destiny, and reason for living is simply to return, to return without rest, so as to fight the flames of "this hell" and to rescue its victims; for his fate is to burn in it in order to save others. . . .

He left England on December 16, 1896, and travelling by Dover, Calais, and the Mont-Cenis, he crowned his stay in Europe by a short journey across Italy. He went to salute da Vinci's Last Supper at Milan, and was especially moved by Rome, which in his imagination held a place comparable to Delhi. At every instant he was struck by the similarity between the Catholic Liturgy [36] and Hindu ceremonies, being sensible of its magnificence and defending its symbolic beauty and emotional appeal to the English who were with him. He was profoundly touched by the memories of the first Christians and martyrs in the Catacombs, and shared the tender veneration of the Italian people for the figures of the infant Christ and the Virgin Mother.[37] They never ceased to dwell in his thought, as can be seen by many words that I have already quoted in India and America. When he was in Switzerland he came to a little chapel in the mountains. Having plucked flowers he placed them at the feet of the Virgin through the hands of Mrs. Sevier, saying:

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[36] Everything reminded him of India: the tonsure of the priests, the sign of the Cross, the incense, the music. He saw in the Holy Sacrament a transformation of the Vedic *Prasada*—the offering of food to the gods, after which it is immediately eaten.

[37] He was at Rome for the festival of Christmas. On the Eve he had seen at St. Maria d'Ara Coeli the simple worship of the Bambino by the children.

"She also is the Mother."

One of his disciples later had the strange idea to give him a copy of the Sistine Madonna to bless, but he refused in all humility, and piously touching the feet of the Child, he said:

"I would have washed His feet, not with my tears, but with my heart's blood."

It may indeed with truth be said that of all Europe and America no other being was so close to him as Christ.[38] And nobody felt more clearly that the great Mediator between God and man was called to be the Mediator also between the East and the West, since the East claims him as its own. It was thence he came to us.

On the boat taking him from Europe back to India, Vivekananda brooded long over this divine bond of union between the two worlds. It was not the only one. There was the link traced by the great disinterested men of letters, who had found unaided and unguided in the darkness the path leading to the most ancient knowledge, to the purest Indian spirit. There was the unexpected flame of spirituality which rose at the first impact of the burning words of the Swami from the crowds of men of goodwill in both Old and New Worlds! There was the upspringing of generous confidence, of richness of heart—(would he have thought the same of the New West, the world conqueror with its panoply of the sword of reason and the mailed fist of force!)—manifested through the pure and candid souls who had given themselves to him. There were the noble friends, the slaves of love, whom he carried in his wake: (two of them, the old Sevier couple, were at his side on the same boat; they were deserting Europe and all their past to follow him. . . .)

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[38] It was not that Vivekananda was more certain in his historic existence than of that of Krishna. A very strange dream that he had had on the boat the last night of the year will no doubt interest the modern iconoclasts of the historic Christ: An old man appeared to him, "Observe carefully this place," he said, "It is the land where Christianity began. I am one of the therapeutic Essenes, who lived there. The truths and the idea preached by us were presented as the teaching of Jesus. But Jesus the person was never born. Various proofs attesting this fact will be brought to light when this place is dug up." At this moment (it was midnight) Vivekananda awoke, and asked a sailor where he was: he was told that the ship was fifty miles off the isle of Crete. Until that day he had never doubted the historical fact of Jesus. But for a spirit of his religious intensity, as of Ramakrishna as well, the historic reality of God was the least of his realities. God, the fruit of the soul of a people, is more real than He who is the fruit of the womb of a Virgin. More surely still is He the seed of fire flung by the Divine.

Indeed, when he summed up his long pilgrimage of four years and the treasures he was carrying to his Indian people, spiritual riches, treasures of the soul, were not the least from which India was to benefit. But was it not more vital and urgent to remedy the misery of India? The urgent help he had gone to get, the handful of corn gleaned on the field of the monstrous wealth of the West, to save the millions of India from annihilation, the monetary help he needed to rebuild the physical and moral health of his people—was he bringing it to them? No. In that respect his journey had failed.[39] His work had to be taken up again on a new basis. India was to be regenerated by India. Health was to come from within.

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[39] Two years later in 1899 he still had bouts of despair because all his success, all his glory, had not brought him the three hundred million rupees necessary for his dream for the material regeneration of India. But he had learned by this time that we are not born to see success:

"No rest. I shall die in harness. Life is a battle. Let me live and die fighting!"

But for the accomplishment of this Herculean task, which he was about to undertake unhesitatingly, the journey to the West had given this young hero marked by death, as he himself was aware, what he had previously lacked—authority.

VII

THE RETURN TO INDIA

THE news of Vivekananda's success at the Parliament of Religions was slow in reaching India, but, once it became known, it created an outburst of joy and national pride. The news spread throughout the country. The monks of Baranagore did not hear of it for six months, and had no idea that it was their brother who was the triumphant hero of Chicago. A letter from Vivekananda told them of it; and in their joy they recalled the old prophecy of Ramakrishna: "Naren will shake the world to its foundations." Rajahs, pandits and peoples rejoiced. India celebrated its conquering champion. Enthusiasm reached its height in Madras and Bengal, their tropical imaginations afire. On September 5, 1894, a year after the Congress at Chicago, a meeting was held in the Town Hall of Calcutta: all classes of the population, all sections of Hinduism were represented; and they had come together to celebate Vivekananda and to thank the American people. A long letter signed with famous names was sent to the United States. Certain political parties tried to make profit out of Vivekananda's work, but when Vivekananda was warned of this he protested emphatically. He refused to take part in any movement that was not disinterested.[1]

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[1] "Let no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings. What nonsense!" (September, 1894.)

"I will have nothing to do with political nonsense. I do not

"I do not care for success or non-success . . . I must keep my movement pure or I will have none of it."

But he had never lost touch with his young disciples in Madras, and constantly wrote them inspiring and stimulating letters; he intended them to become God's militia, poor and faithful unto death. . . .

"We are poor, my brothers, we are nobodies; but such have always been the instruments of the Most High."

His letters from the West laid down their plan of campaign in advance—"the sole duty, to raise the masses of India," and to that end "to collect and centralise the scattered forces of individuals, to cultivate the virtue of obedience, to learn how to work in common for others." He watched their progress from afar, he sent them money to found a Vedantic tribune, the *Brahmavadin* of Madras, to fly his flag in his absence. And in spite of his weight of weariness the nearer he came to the day of his return, the more do his Epistles to India sound like clarion calls:

"There are great things to do . . . Do not fear, my children! Have courage! . . . I am coming back to India and I shall try to set on foot what there is to be done. Work on, brave hearts, the Lord is behind you. . . ."

He announced his intention to found two general Headquarters at Madras and Calcutta, and later two

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believe in any politics. God and Truth are the only polity in the world. Everything else is trash." (September 9, 1895.)

His predecessor, Keshab Chunder Sen, had established the same line of demarcation between politics and his work. "He was ready to join in any public movement *which had no political character* but whose object was the betterment of the fate of the Indian people." (Article published by the *Hindu Patriot* on the occasion of his death in 1884.)

more at Bombay and Allahabad. Round one central organisation he would group his brethren in Ramakrishna and his disciples and his lieutenants of the West into a Mission of help and universal love, which should conquer India and the world by serving them.

Hence he hoped to find on his arrival his militia ready for his word of command. But he never expected that the whole nation—the peoples of India—would rise and lie in wait for the approach of the vessel bringing back their hero, the conqueror of the West. In the great towns committees of all sections of society were founded to receive him. Triumphal arches were erected, streets and houses were decorated. The exaltation was such that many could not await his coming, but poured towards the South of India, towards his disembarkation in Ceylon in order to be the first to welcome him.

When he arrived on January 15, 1897, a mighty shout arose from the human throng covering the quays of Colombo. A multitude flung themselves upon him to touch his feet. A procession was formed with flags at its head. Religious hymns were chanted. Flowers were thrown before his path. Rose water or sacred water from the Ganges was sprinkled. Incense burned before the houses. Hundreds of visitors, rich and poor, brought him offerings.

And Vivekananda once again recrossed the land of India from the South to the North,[2] as he had done formerly as a beggar along its roads. But today his was a triumphal Progress with an escort of delirious people.

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[2] By Colombo, Kandy, Anuradapura, Jafna, Southern India, Pamban, Rameswaram, Ramnad, Madura, Trichinopoli—where hundreds of people in the open country laid themselves on the rails so as to stop his train—Madras and from thence by sea to Calcutta.

Rajahs prostrated themselves before him or drew his carriage.[3] The cannon boomed, and in the exotic processions wherein marched elephants and camels, choirs chanted the victory of Judas Maccabeus.[4]

He was not the man to flee from triumph any more than from battle. He held that not himself but his cause was honoured, and he laid public emphasis on the extraordinary character of such a national reception to a Sannyasin without worldly goods, without name, without home, who carried nothing with him but God. He summoned all his strength to raise the sacred burden on high. A sick man, who needed to nurse his vitality, he made a superhuman expenditure of energy. All along the way he scattered his seed to the winds in a series of brilliant speeches, the most beautiful and heroic that India had ever heard, sending a thrill through her land. I must stop at this point, for they mark the summit of his work. Having returned from his Crusade on the other side of the world, he brought with him the sum total of his experience. His prolonged contact with the West made him feel more deeply the personality of India. And in contrast this made him value the strong and multiple personality of the West. Both seemed to him equally necessary, for they were complementary, awaiting the word to unite them, the common Gospel, and it was he who was to open the path to union.

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Moving as were his lectures at Colombo (India the *Holy Land, The Vedanta Philosophy*) and the one given in the shade of the fig tree of Anaradapura, where, in spite of a mob of Buddhist fanatics, he celebrated *"the Universal Religion,"* preaching this great word, so closely akin to the teaching of Christ, to the people of Rameswaram.

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[3] The Rajah of Ramnad.

[4] From Handel (also at Ramnad.)

"Worship Shiva in the poor, the sick and the feeble!" With the result that the pious rajah was transported to a delirium of charity[5]—it was for Madras that he reserved his greatest efforts. Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium. She erected for him seventeen triumphal arches, presented him with twenty Addresses, in all the languages of Hindustan,[6] and suspended its whole public life at his coming—nine days of roaring fetes. . . .

He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his *Message to India,* a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rama, of Shiva, of Krishna and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal Atman, to march to war. He was a general explaining his *Plan of Campaign,*[7] which called his people to rise en masse:

My India, arise! Where is your vital force? In your Immortal Soul. . . .

"Each nation, like each individual, has one theme in this life, which is its centre, the principle note round which every other note comes to form the harmony . . . If any one nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries,—that nation dies . . . In one nation political power is its vitality, as in England. Artistic life in another and so on. In India religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life . . . And, therefore, if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society . . . the result will be that you will become extinct . . . Social reform . . . and politics have to be preached . . . through that vitality of your religion . . . Every man has to make his own choice; so has every nation. We made our choice ages ago . . . And it is the faith in an immortal soul . . . I challenge anyone to give it up . . . How can you change your nature?"

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[5] The next day he fed thousands of the poor and raised a monument of victory.

[6] Besides these Indian Addresses—among which was one from Vivekananda's sponsor, the Maharajah of Khetri—there were Addresses from England and America, signed by William James, and the University authorities of Harvard and Cambridge: That of the Society of Brooklyn was addressed "to our Indian brothers of the great Aryan family."

[7] *My Plan of Campaign*—The title of his first lectures in Madras.

Do not complain! Yours is the better part. Make use of the power that is in your hands! It is so great that if you only realise it and are worthy of it you are called to revolutionise the world. India is a Ganges of spirituality. The material conquests of the Anglo-Saxon races, far from being able to dam its current, have helped it. England's power has united the nations of the universe, she has opened the paths across the seas so that the waves of the spirit of India may spread until they have bathed the ends of the earth. (So, Vivekananda might have added; for he knew its truth—the Roman Empire was constructed for the victory of Christ. . . .)

What then is the spirit of India? What is this new faith, this word, that the world is awaiting. . . . ?

"The other great idea that the world wants from us to-day—more perhaps the lower classes than the higher, more the uneducated than the educated, more the weak than the strong—is that eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe . . . the only Infinite Reality, that exists in you and me and in all, in the self, in the soul. The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers . . . but that you and I are really one . . . Europe wants it to-day just as much as our down-trodden masses do, and this great principle is even now unconsciously forming the basis of all the latest political and social aspirations that are coming up in England, in Germany, in France and in America."

Moreover, this is the foundation of the old Vedantic faith, of the great Advaitism, the deepest and most pure expression of the ancient spirit of India. . . .

"I heard once the complaint made that I was preaching too much of Advaita (absolute Monism) and too little of Dualism. Aye, I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the dualistic . . . religion. I know it all. But this is not the time with us to weep, even in joy; we have had weeping enough; no more is this the time for us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become like masses of cotton . . . What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills, which nothing can resist, which . . . will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it means going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want, and that can only be created, established and strengthened by understanding and realising the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all. Faith, faith, faith in ourselves . . . If you have faith in the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners . . . have introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves and stand up on that faith . . . Why is it that we, three hundred and thirty millions of people, have been ruled for the last one thousand years by any and every handful of foreigners? . . . Because they had faith in themselves and we had not . . . I read in the newspapers how when one of our poor fellows is murdered or ill-treated by an Englishman, howls go all over the country; I read and I weep, and the next moment comes to my mind who is responsible for it all . . . Not the English . . . it is we who are responsible for all our . . . degradation. Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so . . . that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water."

"Feel, therefore my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving to-day, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless? . . . Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your wives, your children, your property, even your own bodies? . . . That is the first step to become a patriot! . . . For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries that they have nearly become animals. Never were they allowed to hear of the Atman. Let them hear of the Atman—that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is born—Him whom the sword cannot pierce, nor the fire burn, nor the air dry, immortal, without beginning or end, the all pure, omnipotent and omnipresent Atman. . . ."

"Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul . . . Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. *None* is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him!"

"It is a man-making religion that we want . . . It is man-making education all round that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth all-knowledge . . . truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating . . . Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong . . . the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence . . ."

"Therefore . . . my plan is to start institutions in

India to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our scriptures, in India and outside India. Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men sincere to the backbone are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionised. The will is stronger than anything else. Everything must go down before the will, for that comes from God . . . ; a pure and strong will is omnipotent. . . ."[8]

"If the Brahman has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahman's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. If the Brahman is born clever, he can educate himself without help . . . This is justice and reason as I understand it."[9]

"For the next fifty years . . . let all other vain Gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all round us, the *Virat* . . . The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virat*—of those all around us . . . These are all our Gods,—men and animals, and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen. . . ."[10]

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Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words. The reader almost says with the Indian masses and with Vivekananda himself:

[8] *My Plan of Campaign.*
[9] *The Mission of the Vedanta.*
[10] *The Future of India.*

"Shiva . . . Shiva!"

The storm passed; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised like Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrant's engraving; with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life. . . .

Did the dead arise? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald? Was her noisy enthusiasm translated into deeds? At the time nearly all this flame seemed to have been lost in smoke. Two years afterwards Vivekananda declared bitterly that the harvest of young men necessary for his army had not come from India. It is impossible to change the habits of a people buried in a Dream, enslaved by prejudices, and allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort, in a moment. But the Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time the heroic trumpet pierced through her dream, the Forward March of India conscious of her God. She never forgot it. From that day the awakening of the torpid colossus began. If the generation that followed saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India to-day has definitely taken part in the collective action of organised masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty:

"Lazarus come forth!"

of the Message from Madras.

This message of energy had a double meaning: a national and a universal. Although, for the great monk of the Advaita, it was the universal meaning that predominated, it was the other that revived the sinews of India. For she replied to the urge of the fever which has taken possession of the world at this moment of history—the fatal urge of Nationalism, whose monstrous effects we see today. It was therefore at its very inception fraught with danger. There was ground for fearing that its high spirituality would be deviated for the profit of a purely animal pride in race or nation, with all its stupid ferocities. We know the danger, we who have seen too many such ideals—however pure they may have been—employed in the service of the most dirty national passions! But how else was it possible to bring about within the disorganised Indian masses a sense of human Unity, without first making them feel such unity within the bounds of their own nation? The one is the way to the other. All the same I should have preferred another way, a more arduous way, but a more direct, for I know too well that the great majority of those who pass through the nation stage remain there. They have spent all their powers of faith and love on the way . . . But such was not the intention of Vivekananda, who, like Gandhi in this, only thought of the awakening of India in relation to its service for humanity. She was to act as its liberating conscience, the light of eternity. Yet a Vivekananda, more cautious than a Gandhi would have disavowed the desperate effort of the latter to make the religious spirit dominate political action: for on every occasion—as we have already seen in his letters from America, he placed a naked sword between himself and politics . . . *"Noli me tangere."* "I will have nothing to do with the nonsense of politics." But a Vivekananda would have always had to take into account his temperament as well as his spirit. And the proud Indian, who so often fell foul of the exactions or the stupid insults of the conquering Anglo-Saxons, reacted with a violence, which would have made him in spite of himself take part in the dangerous passions of nationalism, condemned by his faith. This inner combat was to last until the crisis of the early days of October 1898, when, having withdrawn alone in Kashmir to a sanctuary of Kali, (he was then the prey of a flood of emotion caused by the sufferings and the devastation of India) [11] he came out transfigured and said to Nivedita:

"All my patriotism is gone . . . I have been very wrong . . . Mother (Kali) said to me. 'What, even if unbelievers should enter My temples and defile My images! What is that to you? Do you protect Me? Or do I protect you?' So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child!"

But through the tumult of the flood, the noise of the cataract of his Madras discourses, the people were incapable of hearing the disdainful and serene voice of Kali, curbing human pride. The people were carried away by the exhilaration and fury of the current.

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[11] The sight of a field of ruins, the result of the wars. He thought to himself: "How can such things be allowed. If I had been there I would have given my life to protect my Mother." Several days before his national pride had been raised by a brutal abuse of English power.

VIII

THE FOUNDING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

A REAL leader of men does not omit the smallest detail. Vivekananda knew that if he was to lead the peoples to the conquest of an ideal it was not enough to inflame their ardour; he had to enroll them in a spiritual militia. The chosen few must be presented to the people as types of the new man; for their very existence was the pledge of the order that was to be.

That is why Vivekananda, as soon as he was free from his triumphs in Madras and Calcutta,[1] immediately turned his attention to his monastery of Alumbazar.[2]

It was with difficulty that he raised his *gurubhais*[3] to the level of his own thoughts! The great bird of passage had flown over the world, and his glance had measured vast horizons, while they had remained piously at home and kept their timorous ways. They loved their great brother, but they hardly recognised him. They could not understand the new ideal of social and national service, which fired him. It was painful to them to sacrifice their orthodox prejudices, and their religious individualism, their free and quiet life of peaceful meditation; and, in all sincerity, it was easy for them to find holy reasons in support of their devout egoism. They even invoked the example of their Master, Ramakrishna, and his detachment from the world. But Vivekananda claimed to be the true depository of Ramakrishna's most profound thought. In his ringing discourses at Madras and Calcutta[4] he had spoken constantly in the name of Ramakrishna: "My Master, my ideal, my hero, my God in this life" . . . He claimed to be the voice of the Paramahamsa, and went so far as to refuse the merit of all initiative, of all new thought, and to claim that he was merely a faithful steward, who carries out exactly his Master's orders:

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[1] At Calcutta his reception was no less magnificent than at Madras with triumphal arches and unharnessed carriage dragged by enthusiastic students in the midst of processions of *samkirtans*, songs and dances, while a princely residence was placed at his disposal. On February 28, 1897, there was a presentation to the victor of an Address of Welcome from the City before an audience of 5,000, followed by patriotic discourses from Vivekananda: a fresh panegyric of energy in the name of the Upanishads and the repudiation of all debilitating doctrines and practises.

[2] Ramakrishna's monks had betaken themselves in 1892 from Baranagore to Alumbazar near Dakshineswar, the sanctuary of Ramakrishna. Several had come to meet Vivekananda at Colombo; Sadananda, his first disciple, had traversed the whole of India to be the first to welcome him.

[3] His brother monks.

"If there has been anything achieved by me, by my thoughts or words or deeds, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped anyone in the world, I lay no claim to it; it was his . . . All that has been weak has been mine, and all that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure and holy has been his inspiration, his word—and he himself."

The two Ramakrishnas—the one whose outspread wings had brooded over the disciples left behind in the dovecote—and the other who, carried on those same wings, had covered the world in the shape of his great disciple—were bound to come into conflict. But the victory was never in doubt: it was a foregone conclusion, not only on account of the immense ascendancy of the young conqueror, the superiority of his genius and the prestige of India's acclamation, but on account of the love his brethren bore him and that Ramakrishna had shown for him. He was the Master's anointed.

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[4] Lectures on the *Sages of India* (Madras) and on the *Vedanta in all its Phases* (Calcutta.)

So they obeyed the orders Vivekananda imposed upon them, without always agreeing with them at the bottom of their hearts. He forced his brethren to receive the European disciples into their community, and to take up the mission of service and social help. He sternly forbade them to think any longer of themselves and their own salvation. He came, so he declared, to create a new order of Sannyasins, who would go down into hell, if need be, to save others.[5] There had been enough of the sterile God of solitary prayers! Let them worship the Living God, the Coming God, the Virat, dwelling in all living souls. And let "the lion of Brahman" sleeping in the heart of each man awake at their call.[6]

So urgent was the tone of the young Master's injunctions that the excellent brothers, of whom several were his elders, obeyed perhaps before they really believed him.[7] The first to set the example of leaving the monastic home was just the one who felt his departure the most, for he had never left it for a single day in twelve years: Ramakrishnananda. He went to Madras and founded a centre for the propagation of Vedantic principles in Southern India. Then Saradananda and Abhedananda left, followed by him who was most deeply penetrated by the spirit of Service, Akhandananda (Gangadhar). He went to Murchidabady, where famine was raging, and devoted himself to the relief of the victims.[8]

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[5] He added this theological argument: "To think of his liberation is unworthy of the disciple of an Avatar," (of a divine Incarnation, as Ramakrishna was in their eyes): for his liberation is secured by that fact alone. (Such an argument, though perhaps effective for the weak, diminishes in our eyes the cost of the devotional act.)

[6] Words spoken by Vivekananda at the ceremony of the initiation of four young disciples.

[7] We shall see later in a pathetic scene the objections that they never ceased to raise.

Different paths of Service *(Savashramas)* on behalf of the great Indian community were tried haphazard at first.

But Vivekananda was feverishly anxious that order and plan should be established once and for all. There was not a day to be lost. The superhuman expenditures of strength that he had had to make during the first months of his return to India in stirring the masses, had brought on a severe attack of his disease. During the spring of the same year he had been forced to withdraw into the mountains twice for rest—to Darjeeling the first time for several weeks—and to Almora the second time (from May 6 to the end of July) for two and a half months.

In the interval he had had sufficient energy to found the new order: the Ramakrishna Mission, which lives and carries on his work to this day.

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On May 1, 1897, all Ramakrishna's monastic and lay disciples were summoned to Calcutta to the home of one of their number, Balaram. Vivekananda spoke as the Master. He said that without strict organisation nothing lasting could be established. In a country like India it was not wise to begin such an organisation on the republican system, wherein each had an equal voice and where decisions were according to the vote of a majority. It would be high time for that when the members had learnt to subordinate their interests and their particular prejudices to the public weal. What they wanted for the time being was a dictator. Moreover he himself was only acting in the capacity of a servant of the common Master—*In nomine et in signo Ramakrishna*—as were they all.

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[8] It was he who in 1894 had been so moved by Vivekananda's words that he had begun his work of service by going to Khetri to undertake the education of the masses. (See p. 20. Note 1.)

The following resolutions were passed at his instigation:[9]

1. An association is to be founded under the name of the *Ramakrishna Mission.*

2. Its aim is to preach the truths which Ramakrishna, for the good of humanity, preached and taught by the practise of his own life, and to help others to put them into practise in their lives for their temporal, intellectual and spiritual progress.

3. Its *duty* is to direct in a fitting spirit the activities of this movement, inaugurated by Ramakrishna *"for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying eternal Religion."*

4. Its *methods of action* are: I. *"to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses.* II. *to promote and encourage arts and industries."* III. to introduce and to spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas such as they were elucidated in the life of Ramakrishna.

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[9] I have thought it enough to give a summary. I have italicized the passages which are of most interest to Western minds.

5. It was to have two branches of action: the first to be Indian: *Maths* (monasteries) and *Ashrams* (convents for retreat) were to be established in different parts of India for the education of such Sannyasins and lay brethren (heads of families) *"as may be willing to devote their lives to the teaching of others:* the second foreign: it was to send members of the order into countries outside India for the foundation of spiritual centres, and *"for creating a close relationship and a spirit of mutual help and sympathy between the foreign and the Indian centres."*

6. *"The aim and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it should have no connection with politics."*

The definitely social, humanitarian and "panhuman" —apostolic—nature of the Order founded by Vivekananda is obvious. Instead of opposing, as do most religions, faith to reason and the stress and necessity of modern life, it was to take its place with science in the front rank; it was to cooperate with progress, material as well as spiritual, and to encourage arts and industries. But its real object was the good of the masses. It laid down that the essence of its faith was the establishment of brotherhood among the different religions, since their harmony constituted the Eternal Religion. The whole was under the aegis of Ramakrishna, whose great heart had embraced all mankind with its love.

"The sacred swan" had taken its flight. The first stroke of his wings overspread the whole earth. If the reader wishes to observe in the spirit of the founder the dream of his full flight, he will find it in the visionary interview between Vivekananda and Sarat Chandra Chakravarti.[10]

For the moment the next business was the election of the heads. Vivekananda, the General President, made Brahmananda and Yogananda President and Vice-President of the Calcutta centre, and they were to meet every Sunday at Balaram's house.[11] Vivekananda then without further delay inaugurated the twofold task of public Service and Vedantic teaching.[12]

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The monks though they obeyed him found it difficult to follow him, and occasionally very lively debates took place between them, although these were always of a fraternal character. Vivekananda's passion and humour were not always under control, for both were overexcited by his latent malady; and sometimes those who contradicted him felt the scratch of his claws. But they took it all in good part; for such was only the "King's Play." [13] Both sides were assured of their mutual devotion.

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[10] In November 1898 at Belur.

[11] This condition lasted for two years. In April 1898 the building of the central Math of the Order was begun at Belur near Calcutta. The dedication took place on December 9 of the same year, and the final occupation on January 2, 1899. The Association divided into two twin institutions, with a considerable difference between them: for the first, the *Ramakrishna Math* is a purely monastic body, with its Maths and Ashrams; and its legal status was established during 1899; it is vowed to the maintenance and the diffusion of the universal Religion: the second institution is the *Ramakrishna Mission,* which exercises jurisdiction over all works of public utility, both philanthropic and charitable: it is open to laymen as well as to clerics, and is under the government of administrators and the President of the Math. It was legally registered in April 1909 after Vivekananda's death. The two organisations are at once akin, allied and yet separate. In the third part of this volume we shall devote a chapter to the *Ramakrishna Math and Mission* and its development up to the present time.

[12] He himself gave lessons to the brethren; he instituted discussions upon the Vedanta. Here again, in spite of his learned attachment to the ancient doctrines, he showed the breadth of his mind; he called the division between Aryans and "Gentiles" ignorance. He loved to see in a Max Müller a reincarnation of some ancient commentator on the Vedas.

At times they were still seized with longing for their contemplative life and for *their* Ramakrishna, the king of Ecstacy. They would have felt it sweet to turn the Ramakrishna Mission again into a cult of the Temple with its contemplative inaction. But Vivekananda roughly shattered their dream.

"Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna up within your own limits? . . . Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than what his disciples understand him to be.[14] He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. One glance of his gracious eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant. I shall scatter his ideas broadcast over the world. . . ."

For dear as was Ramakrishna the man to him, his word was still more precious. He had no intention of raising an altar to a new God,[15] but of shedding on mankind the manna of his thought—thought that first and foremost was to be expressed in action. "Religion, if it is a true religion, must be practical." [16] Moreover, in his eyes, "the best form of religion" was "to see Shiva in all living men, and especially in the poor." He would have liked every man each day to take a hungry Narayana, or a lame Narayana or a blind Narayana or six or twelve, as their means permitted, into their own houses, there to feed them and to offer them the same worship which they would give to Shiva or to Vishnu in the temple.[17]

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[13] Allusion to one of La Fontaine's fables.

[14] Vivekananda was right not to allow this pious egotism and contemplative idleness to claim Ramakrishna as an example. It must be remembered that Ramakrishna himself often strove against his ecstatic leanings, which stopped him from giving adequate help to others. One of his prayers was, "Let me be born again and again, even in the shape of a dog, if so I can be of use to one single soul! . . ."

[15] "I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already." These were the very words of Ramakrishna.

Moreover, he took great care lest sentimentalism in some form or another should creep in, for he detested it in all forms. A sentimental trend of mind is only too prone to expand in Bengal, where its result has always been to stifle virility. Vivekananda was adamant on the subject, all the more bitterly because (the following scene gives pathetic evidence of this fact) he had had to drag it out of himself as well as others before he could begin his work.

One day one of his brother monks reproached him jestingly for having introduced into the Ramakrishna's ecstatic teaching the Western ideas of organisation, action, and service, of which Ramakrishna had not approved. Vivekananda retorted ironically at first, and with rather rough humour to his antagonist and through him to the other hearers: (for he felt that they were in sympathy with the speaker):

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[16] This was the theme of his lectures in the Punjab, October-November 1897.

[17] Public lecture at Lahore. There was no question here of charity in the European sense—"Here, take this and go away"—an entire misconception which had a bad effect alike on the giver and the receiver. Vivekananda repudiated it. "In the religion of Service," such as he conceived it "the receiver is greater than the giver; because for the time being the receiver was God Himself."

"What do you know? You are an ignorant man . . . Your study ended like that of Prahlada, at seeing the first letter of the Bengali alphabet, Ka, for it reminded Prahlada of Krishna: and he could not proceed further because of the tears that came into his eyes . . . You are sentimental fools! What do you understand of religion? You are only good at praying with folded hands: 'O Lord; how beautiful is Your nose! How sweet are Your eyes!' and all such nonsense . . . and you think your salvation is secured and Sri Ramakrishna will come at the final hour and take you by the hand to the highest heaven . . . Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Maya! Because he said to some one 'Seek and find God first; doing good in the world is a presumption!' . . . As if God is such an easy thing to be achieved! As if He is such a fool as to make Himself a plaything in the hands of the imbecile!"

Then suddenly he declared:

"You think you have understood Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think *Jnanan* is dry knowledge, to be attained by a desert path killing out the tenderest faculty of the heart! Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense, which makes one impotent. You wish to preach Ramakrishna as *you* have understood him; which is mighty little! . . . Hands off! Who cares for *your* Ramakrishna? Who cares for *your Bhakti* and *Mukti?* Who cares what the Scriptures say? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *Tamas,* to stand on their own feet and be *men* inspired with the spirit of *Karmayoga* . . . I am not a follower of Ramakrishna, or anyone. I am a follower of him only who serves and helps others without caring for his own Bhakti or Mukti! . . .

His face looked like a flaming fire, says a witness, his eyes flashed, his voice was choked, his body shaken and trembling. Suddenly he fled to his own room. The others, completely overwhelmed, remained silent. After a few minutes one or two of them went and looked into his room. Vivekananda was deep in meditation. They waited in silence . . . An hour afterwards Vivekananda returned. His features still bore the traces of the violent storm but he had recovered his calm. He said softly:

"When one attains Bhakti, one's nerves and heart become so soft and delicate that they cannot bear even the touch of a flower. Do you know that I cannot even read a novel nowadays? I cannot think or talk of Sri Ramakrishna long without being overwhelmed. So I am trying and trying always to keep down the welling rush of Bhakti within me. I am trying to bind and bind myself with the iron chains of Jnanan, for still my work to my motherland is unfinished, and my Message to the world not yet fully delivered. So, as soon as I find that Bhakti feelings are trying to come up to sweep me off my feet, I give a hard knock to them and make myself as firm as adamant by bringing up austere Jnanan. . . . Oh! I have work to do! I am the slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be done by me and will not give me rest till I have finished it. Oh! His love for me! . . ."

He was again unable to proceed from emotion. Yogananda thereupon tried to turn his thoughts; for they feared a fresh outburst.[18]

From that day onwards there was never a word of protest against Vivekananda's methods. What could they object to him that he had not already thought himself? They had read to the depths of his great tortured soul.

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[18] *Life of Vivekananda,* III. p. 160.

Every mission is dramatic for it is accomplished at the expense of him who receives it, at the expense of one part of his nature, of his rest, of his health, often of his deepest aspirations. Vivekananda shared his countrymen's nature with their vision of God, their need to flee from life and the world as wandering monks, either for meditation, for study or driven by the ecstasy of love, to the everlasting flight of the unattached soul which has no resting place in order never to lose contact with the universal One. Those who watched him closely often heard a sigh of weariness and regret coming from the depths of his heart.[19]

But he had not chosen his way of life. His mission had chosen him. . . . "There is no rest for me. What Ramakrishna called Kali took possession of my soul and body, three or four days before he left this earth.

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[19] "I was born for the life of the scholar, retired, quiet, poring over my books. But the Mother dispenses otherwise. Yet the tendency is there . . ." (June 3, 1897, Almora.)

He had hours of intense religious vision, "When work seemed to him no more than illusion." (October 1898.)

One day when he had been arguing with considerable irritation with one of his monks, Virajnanda, in order to tear him away from his meditations, and force him to useful action:

"How could you think of meditating for hours? Enough if you can concentrate your mind for five minutes or even one minute. For the rest of the time one has to occupy himself with studies and some work for the general good."

Virajnanda did not agree and went away in silence. Vivekananda said to another monk that he understood only too well that the memories of the wandering days were among the sweetest and the happiest of his whole life, and he would give anything if he could again have that unknownness, freed from all cares of public life. (January 13, 1901.)

And that force forces me to work, work, and never allows me to busy myself with my own personal needs."[20]

It made him forget himself and his desires, his well-being, even his health for the good of others.[21]

And he had to inculcate the same faith in his apostolic militia. This was only possible by stirring in them the energy of action. He had to deal with a nation of "dyspeptics," drunk with their own sentimentality.[22] That is why he could be harsh sometimes in order to harden them. He wished "in all fields of activity to awaken that austere elevation of spirit which arouses heroism." This was to be accomplished by both manual and spiritual work, scientific research, and the service of men. If he attached so much importance to the teaching of the Vedanta, it was because he saw in it a sovereign tonic:

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[20] It was shortly before his death that, speaking to a disciple, Saratchandra Chakravarti, Vivekananda told him about this mysterious transmission which took place in him three or four days before Ramakrishna's death.

"Ramakrishna made me come alone and sit in front of him, while he gazed into my eyes, and passed into samadhi. Then I perceived a powerful current of subtle force, like an electric shock. My body was transpierced. I also lost consciousness. For how long I do not know . . . When I returned to myself I saw the Master weeping. He said to me with an infinite tenderness: 'O my Naren, I am nothing now but a poor fakir. I have given thee all. By virtue of this gift thou wilt do great things in this world; and not till afterwards will it be permitted to thee to return . . .' It seems to me that it was this force which carried me into the turmoil and makes me work, work. . . ."

[21] "I should consider it a great honour if I had to go through hell in doing good to my country." (October 1897.)

"The Sannyasin takes two vows: 1. to realise truth. 2. to help the world. Above all he renounces all thoughts of heaven!" (to Nivedita. July 1899.)

In Indian thought heaven is lower than communion with Brahman. From heaven there is a return.

[22] "A nation of dyspeptics, indulging in antics to the accompaniment of Khol and Karatal and singing Kirtans and other songs of sentimental type . . . I wish to stimulate energy, even by means of martial music, and proscribe everything that titillates langorous sentiments . . . ." (Dialogue with Saratchandra, 1901.)

"To revive the country by the sounding notes of the Vedic rhythm."

He constrained the heart not only of others but also his own, although he was only too aware that the heart is a source of the divine. As a leader of men, he did not want to stifle it, but to put it in its proper place. Where the heart had the ascendancy he debased it, where it was in an inferior position he exalted it.[23] He desired an exact equilibrium of inner powers,[24] in view of the work to be done in the direction of human Service, for that was the most pressing: the ignorance, suffering, and misery of the masses could not wait.

It is true that equilibrium is never stable. It is particularly difficult to acquire, and even more difficult to maintain in those extreme races, who pass immediately from the red heat of exaltation to the dead cinders of desire; and it was a harder task still in the case of a man such as Vivekananda, torn between twenty contradictory demons, faith, science, art and action, all the

[23] In the Punjab, the country of fighting races, he encouraged Bhakti, though he condemned it in Bengal. He went so far as to long in Lahore for the processions of dances and religious songs, the *samkirtans,* which he held up to derision at Calcutta. For "this land of the Five Rivers (Panjab) is spiritually dry," and it needed watering. (November, 1897.)

[24] Before his second journey to the West when he was tracing for his monks his ideal of religious life, he said to them, "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields. You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the Shastras now and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market." The object of the monastery was man-making. "The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart." (June, 1899.)

passions of victory and action. It was wonderful that he kept in his feverish hands to the end an equal balance between the two poles: a burning love of the Absolute (the Advaita) and the irresistible appeal of suffering Humanity. And what makes him so appealing to us is that at those times when equilibrium was no longer possible and he had to make a choice it was the latter that won the day: he sacrificed everything else to Pity:[25] to "Poor suffering Humanity," as Beethoven, his great European brother said.

The beautiful episode of Girish is a moving example. It will be remembered that this friend of Ramakrishna—the celebrated Bengali, dramatist, writer, and comedian, who led the life of a "libertine" in the double sense of the classic age until the moment when the tolerant and mischievous fisher of the Ganges took him upon his hook—had since, without leaving the world, become the most ardent and sincere of the converts; he spent his days in a constant transport of faith through love, of *Bhaktiyoga*. But he had kept his freedom of speech: and all Ramakrishna's disciples showed him great respect in memory of their master. .

One day he came in while Vivekananda was discussing the most abstract philosophy with his monks. Vivekananda broke off and said to him in a mockingly affectionate tone:

"Well, Girish, you have never troubled to study these things, you have spent your days with your Krishna and your Vishnu."

Girish replied,

"Well Naren, you have read and re-read your Vedas and Vedanta. But tell me, have you found there presented remedies for the groans and the cries of hungry mouths, for abominable sins, for the innumerable evils and miseries which are to be met with every day? For instance the mother of a house who formerly fed fifty souls every day now has not had the wherewithal to feed her children and herself for three days. Another's wife has been violated and tortured to death by monsters. Another's young widow has been driven to abortion to hide her shame. . . . Tell me, Naren, what preventive remedy for such evils have you found in the Vedas? . . ."

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[25] Speaking to his monks at Belur, he said once (1899): "If your brain and your heart come into conflict, follow your heart!"

And as Girish continued in this vein of sharp irony, depicting the dark picture of society, Vivekananda was silent, a prey to emotion, and tears came into his eyes. He could not bear it; he was choked; and suddenly left the room. Girish said to the disciples:

"Now, did you see with your own eyes what a large heart your Guru possess! I do not esteem him so much for being a scholar and intellectual giant, as for that large-heartedness which made him walk out, shedding tears for the misery of mankind. As soon as he heard it, mark you, all his Vedas and Vedanta vanished out of sight, as it were, all the learning and scholarship that he was displaying a moment ago was cast aside and his whole being was filled to overflow with the milk of loving-kindness. Your Swamiji is as much a Jnani and a Pandit as a lover of God and humanity." Vivekananda returned, and said to Sadananda that his heart was gnawing with pain at the poverty and distress of his countrymen, and exhorted him to do something by opening a small relief centre at least. And turning to Girish, he said:

"Ah, Girish! the thought comes to me that even if I have to undergo a thousand births to relieve the misery of the world, aye, even to remove the least pain from anyone, I shall cheerfully do it."[26]

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The generous passion of his pitiful heart mastered his brethren and disciples, and one and all, they devoted themselves to the multiple forms of human Service, which he pointed out to them.

During the summer of 1897 Akhandananda, with the help of two disciples sent him by Vivekananda, for four or five months fed and nursed hundreds of poor people suffering from malaria in the district of Murchidabad in Bengal; he collected abandoned children and founded an orphanage first at Mohula and afterwards in other places. With Franciscan patience and love Akhandananda consecrated himself to the education of these poor children without distinction of caste or belief. In 1899 he taught them the trades of weaving, tailoring, joinery and silk culture, and reading and writing, arithmetic and English.

The same year 1897 Triganutita opened a famine centre at Dinajpur. In two months he came to the rescue of 84 villages. Other centres were founded at Dakshineswar and Calcutta.

The following year, April-May 1898, a mobilisation of the whole Ramakrishna Mission against the plague that had broken out in Calcutta took place. Vivekananda, ill though he was, hastily returned from the Himalayas to put himself at the head of the relief work. Money was lacking. All that they had had at their disposal had been spent on the purchase of a site for the construction of a new monastery. Vivekananda did not hesitate for an instant:

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[26] Life of Vivekananda, III., p. 165.

"Sell it, if necessary," he ordered. "We are Sannyasins, we ought always to be ready to sleep under the trees and live on what we beg every day."

A big stretch of ground was rented, and sanitary camps laid out upon it. Vivekananda went into all the hovels in order to encourage the workers. The management of the work was entrusted to Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), recently arrived from Europe, and to the Swamis Sadananda and Shivananda, with several other helpers. They supervised the disinfection and the cleansing of four of the main poor quarters of Calcutta. Vivekananda called the students to a meeting (April 1899), and reminded them of their duty in times of calamity. They organised themselves into bands to inspect poor houses, to distribute pamphlets of hygiene and to set the example of scavenging. Every Sunday they came to the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission to report to Sister Nivedita.

The Mission also made it a holy custom to make the anniversary of Ramakrishna a festival for the poor, and to feed thousands on that day at all the centres of the Order.

And so a new spirit of solidarity and brotherly communion between all classes of the nation was formed in India.

Parallel to this work of social Mutual Aid, education and Vedantic preaching was undertaken; for to use his own words, Vivekananda wanted India to have "an Islamic body and a Vedantic heart." During 1897 Ramakrishnananda, who was giving lectures in Madras and the neighbourhood, opened eleven classes in different parts of the state; side by side he carried on teaching work and cared for the starving. In the middle of the same year Vivekananda sent Shivananda to Ceylon to preach the Vedas. Educationalists were seized with a holy passion. Vivekananda rejoiced to hear the headmistress of a school for young girls, which he was visiting, say to him:

"I adore these young girls as God (Bhagavad). I do not know any other worship."

Less than three months after the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, Vivekananda was obliged to stop his own activities and undergo a course of treatment for several weeks at Almora. Nevertheless he was able to write:

"The movement is begun. It will never stop." (July 9, 1897.)

"Only one idea was burning in my brain—to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys work in the midst of famine and disease and misery—nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken Pariah and feeding the starving *Chandala* and the Lord sends help to me and to them all. . . . He is with me, the Beloved. He was when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about unknown from place to place in India. . . . I feel my task is done—at most three or four years more of life is left.[27] I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next: and may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. . . ." [28]

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[27] There remained exactly five. He died in July, 1902.

He made use of the least respite from his illness to increase his work tenfold. From August to December 1897 he went like a whirlwind through Northern India from the Punjab to Kashmir, sowing his seed wherever he went. He discussed with the Maharajah the possibility of founding a great Advaitist monastery in Kashmir, he preached to the students of the four Lahore colleges urging strength and belief in man as a preparation for belief in God, and he formed among them an association independent of all other sects for the relief, hygiene, and education of the people. Wherever he went he never wearied of trying to rebuild individual character in India, by helping each man to be delivered of the God within him. He constantly subjected faith to the test of action. He tried to remedy social injustices, by preaching intermarriage between the castes and subdivisions of castes so that they might draw near to each other, by ameliorating the condition of outcasts, by occupying himself with the fate of unmarried women and of Hindu widows, by fighting sectarianism wherever it was to be found, and vain formalism, the "untouchables" as he called them. At the same time—(the two tasks were complementary)—he worked for the reconstruction of the Hindu intellect by spreading a real knowledge of Sanskrit, by seeking to integrate Western science in it, and by reviving the Indian universities, so that they might produce men rather than diplomas and officials.

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[28] Cf. *Life of Vivekananda,* III, 178. Here comes the admirable confession of faith that I have already quoted in part, and to which I shall return again in my final examination of Vivekananda's thought.

He had no thought of *Hind Swaraj* against English rule of the political independence of India. He depended on British cooperation as on the cooperation of the universe. And as a matter of fact England helped his work: in default of the state Anglo-Saxon disciples from London and New York brought the Swami their personal devotion and sufficient funds to buy land and build the great monastery of Belur.[29]

The year 1898 was chiefly devoted to arrangements for the new working of the Ramakrishna Math, and to the founding of journals or reviews which were to be the intellectual organs of the Order and a means to educate India.[30]

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[29] On fifteen acres of land situated upon the other bank of the Ganges opposite the old building at Baranagore, near Calcutta. The purchase took place during the first months of 1898; the building was begun in April under the architect who became Swami Vijnananda.

[30] *The Prabuddha Bharata,* already in existence, had been suspended as a result of the death of its young editor. It was taken over by Sevier, and transferred from Madras to Almora, under the editorship of a remarkable man who had withdrawn from the world, and whose kindred passion for the public good had drawn him to Vivekananda, who had initiated him into his Order after only a few days of preparation under the name of Swami Swarupananda. He was in Hindu religious literature the master of Miss Noble (Nivedita). He was to become the President of the Advaita Ashram.

At the beginning of 1899 another monthly review was founded, Udbodhan, under the direction of Swami Trigumatita. Its guiding principles were never to attack anybody's faith, to present the doctrine of the Vedas in the simplest form so that it might be accessible to all, to find room for definite questions of hygiene and education, and the physical and spiritual betterment of the race and to spread ideas of moral purity, mutual aid and universal harmony.

For the first of these magazines Vivekananda published in August, 1898, his beautiful poem: *To the Awakened India,* which in a real manifesto of active energy and realised faith.

But the chief importance of this year '98 was Vivekananda's development of his Western disciples.

They had come at his call—Miss Margaret Noble at the end of January to found in conjunction with Miss Muller model institutions for the education of Indian women—Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod in February.[31] In March Margaret Noble took the vow of Brahmacharya and the name of Nivedita (the consecrated one). Vivekananda introduced her in warm terms to the Calcutta public as the gift of England to India,[32] and so that he might the better root out all trace of the memories, prejudices and customs of her country,[33] he took her with a group of disciples on a journey of several months through historic India.[34]

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[31] Miss MacLeod, who has done me the honor of communicating her memories, had known Vivekananda for seven years, and he had been her guest for months at a time. But though she was devoted to him she never renounced her independence, nor had he demanded it. He always gave full liberty to those who had not voluntarily contracted vows, so she remained a friend and a free helper, not an initiated disciple like Nivedita. She told me that she had asked his permission before she came to rejoin the Swami in India. He had replied by this imperious message (which I quote from memory):

"Come if you wish to see poverty, degradation, dirt, and men in rags who speak of God! But if you want anything else do not come! For we cannot bear one criticism the more."

She conformed strictly to this reservation due to the Compassionate love of Vivekananda for his debased people, whose humiliations he resented with wounded pride. But on one occasion she happened to make a laughing remark with regard to a Brahmin of grotesque appearance whom they met in the Himalayas. Vivekananda "turned on her like a lion," withered her with a glance and cried:

"Down with your hands. Who are you? What have *you* ever done?"

She remained silent, disconcerted. Later she learnt that this very same poor Brahmin had been one of those who by begging had collected the sum to make it possible for Vivekananda to undertake his journey to the West. And she realised that a man's real self is not what he appears, but what he does.

[32] "How can I best help you?" she asked him when she arrived. "Love India."

But, and this is curious, while plunging the souls of his companions into the religious abyss of his race, he lost himself in it until he seemed to be submerged. Men saw the great Advaitist, the fervent worshipper of the Absolute without form or face, go through a phase of devouring passion for the legendary Gods, for the sovereign pair: Shiva and the Mother. Undoubtedly in this he was only following the example of his Master, Ramakrishna, in whose heart there was room for the formless God and for the forms of all Gods, and who for years on end had experienced the bliss of passionate abandon to the beautiful Goddess. But the striking point in Vivekananda's case is that he came to it *after,* not *before* he had mastered the Absolute; and he brought to his passion for them all the tragic vehemence of his nature, so that he clothed the Gods, especially Kali, in a quite different atmosphere from the one in which the ecstatic tenderness of Ramakrishna had enveloped them.

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[33] This was no manifestation of the evil spirit of chauvinism or hostility to the West. In 1900 when he established the Swami Turiyananda in California, he said to him: "From this day, destroy even the memory of India within you." In order to work profoundly upon a people for its real betterment, it is necessary to become one with that people and forget oneself in it: that was the principle Vivekananda imposed on his disciples.

[34] She has left an account of this journey and the talk with Vivekananda in her *Notes of some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda.* I also owe to Miss MacLeod's reminiscences (also of the party) many precious notes, especially on the moral discipline, to which Vivekananda subjected Nivedita. He had not the slightest respect for her instinctive national loyalty, for her habits, or for her dislikes as a Westerner; he constantly humiliated her proud and logical English character. Perhaps in this way he wished to defend himself and her against the passionate adoration she had for him; although Nivedita's feelings for him were always absolutely pure he perhaps saw their danger. He snubbed her mercilessly and found fault with all she did. He hurt her. She came back to her companions overwhelmed and in tears. Eventually they remonstrated with Vivekananda for his excessive severity, and from that time it was softened, and light entered Nivedita's heart. She only felt more deeply the price of the Master's confidence and the happiness of submitting to his rules of thought.

After a stay at Almora where the Seviers were already established and where the Advaita Ashram was about to be built—then after a journey to Kashmir in three house boats up the river through the Vale of Srinagar—Vivekananda with Nivedita undertook at the end of July 1898 the great pilgrimage to the cave of Amarnath, in a glacial valley of the Western Himalayas. They were part of a crowd of two or three thousand pilgrims, forming at each halting place a whole town of tents. Nivedita noticed a sudden change come over her Master. He became one of the thousands, scrupulously observing the most humble practises demanded by custom. In order to reach their goal it was necessary to climb for days up rocky slopes, along dangerous paths, to cross several miles of glacier, and to bathe in the sacred torrents in spite of the cold. On the 2nd of August, the day of the annual festival, they arrived at the enormous cavern, large enough to contain a vast cathedral: at the back rose the ice-lingam—great Shiva Himself. Everyone had to enter naked, the body smeared with cinders. Behind the others trembling with emotion, Vivekananda entered in an almost fainting condition; and there, prostrate, in the darkness of the cave before that whiteness, surrounded by the music of hundreds of voices singing, he had a vision . . . Shiva appeared to him. . . . He would never say what he had seen and heard. . . . But the blow of the apparition on his tense nerves was such that he almost died. When he emerged from the grotto there was a clot of blood in his left eye, and his heart was dilated and never regained its normal condition. For weeks afterwards he spoke of nothing but Shiva, he saw Shiva everywhere; he was saturated by Him; the snowy Himalaya was Shiva seated on his throne. . . .

A month later in turn he was possessed by the Mother, Kali. The Divine Maternity was omnipresent. He worshipped her even in the person of a little girl four years old. But it was not only in such peaceful guise that she appeared to him. His intense meditation led him to the dark face of the symbol. He had a terrible vision of Kali—the mighty Destructress, lurking behind the veil of life—the terrible One, hidden by the dust of the living who pass by, and all the appearances raised by their feet. During the night in a fever he awoke, groped in the dark for pencil and paper and wrote his famous poem, *Kali the Mother,* as if groping for enlightenment, then fell back exhausted:

The stars are blotted out,
  The clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
  In the roaring, whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics,—
  Just loose from the prison house,—
Wrenching trees by the roots,
  Sweeping all from the path.
The sea has joined the fray,
  And swirls up mountain-waves,
To reach the pitchy sky.
  The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side
  A thousand, thousand shades
Of Death begrimed and black—
  Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy. . . .

Come, Mother come!
For Terror is Thy name,
Death is in Thy Breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou Time, the All-Destroyer!
Come, O Mother, come!
Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes."[35]

He said to Nivedita:

"Learn to recognise the Mother as instinctively in Evil, Terror, Sorrow, and Annihilation, as in that which makes for Sweetness and Joy. Fools put a garland of flowers around Thy neck, O Mother, and then start back in terror and call Thee 'The Merciful' . . . Meditate on death. Worship the Terrible. Only by the worship of the Terrible can the Terrible itself be overcome and Immortality gained! . . . There could be bliss in torture too. . . . The Mother Herself is Brahman. Even her curse is blessing. The heart must become a cremation ground. Pride, selfishness, desire all burnt into ashes. Then, and then alone will the Mother come! . . ." And the Englishwoman, shaken and bewildered by the storm, saw the good order and comfort of her Western faith disappearing in the typhoon of the Cosmos invoked by the Indian visionary. She wrote:

"As he spoke, the underlying egoism of worship that is devoted to the kind God, to Providence, the consoling Divinity, without a heart for God in the earthquake, or God in the volcano, overwhelmed the listener. One saw that such worship was at bottom, as the Hindu calls it, merely 'Shop-keeping,' and one realised the infinitely greater boldness and truth of the teaching that God manifests through evil *as well as* through good. One saw that the true attitude for the mind and will that are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact that determination, in the stern words of the Swami Vivekananda 'to seek death not life, to hurl oneself upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible for evermore!' "[36]

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[35] *Complete works of Vivekananda,* IV. 319.

Once more we see in this paroxysm the will to heroism, which to Vivekananda was the soul of action. Ultimate Truth desiring to be seen in all its terrible nakedness and refusing to be softened—Faith which expects nothing in return for its free bestowing and scorns the bargain of "giving to get in return" and all its promise of Paradise; for its indestructible energy is like steel forged on the anvil by the blows of the hammer.[37]

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[36] The Master as I saw Him, by Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, p. 169.

[37] Even the tender Ramakrishna knew the terrible face of the Mother. But he loved her smile better.

"One day," so Sivanath Sastri, one of the founders and heads of the Sadharan Brahmosamaj, relates, "I was present when several men began to argue about the attributes of God, and if they were more or less according to reason. Ramakrishna stopped them, saying, 'Enough, enough. What is the use of disputing whether the Divine attributes are reasonable or not? . . . You say that God is good; can you convince me of his goodness by this reasoning? Look at the flood that has just caused the death of thousands. How can you prove that a benevolent God ordered it? You will perhaps reply that this same flood swept away uncleannesses and watered the earth . . . etc. But could not a good God do that without drowning thousands of innocent men, women and children?' Thereupon one of the disputants said, 'Then, ought we to believe that God is cruel?' 'O idiot,' cried Ramakrishna, 'who said that? Fold your hands and say humbly, "O God, we are too

Our great Christian ascetics knew and still experience this virile pleasure. Even Pascal tasted of it. But instead of its leading to detachment from action, Vivekananda was inspired by it with a red hot zeal that hardened his will, flung him into the thick of the fight with a tenfold renewed zest.

He espoused all the sufferings of the world. "One had the impression," wrote Nivedita, "as if no blow to any in the world, could pass and leave our Master's heart untouched: as if no pain even to that of death could elicit anything but love and blessing." [38]

"I have hugged," he said, "the face of Death."

He was possessed by it for several months. He heard no other voice but that of the Mother, and it had a terrible reaction upon his health. When he returned his monks were terrified at the change. He remained plunged in concentration so intense that a question ten times repeated would invoke no answer. He recognised that its cause was "an intense *tapasya*" (the fire of asceticism).

" . . . Shiva Himself has entered into my brain. He *will not* go!"

For the rationalist minds of Europe who find such obsession by personal Gods repugnant, it may be useful

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feeble and too weak to understand Thy nature and Thy deeds. Deign to enlighten us! . . . Do not argue, Love! . . .""'"

(*Reminiscences of Ramakrishna* by Sivanath Sastri.)

The knowledge of the terrible God was the same with both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. But their attitude was different. Ramakrishna bowed his head and kissed the Divine foot which trampled on his heart. Vivekananda, head erect, looked death in the eyes; and his sombre joy of action rejoiced in it. He ran to hurl himself "upon the point of the sword."

[38] Probably the moral upheaval caused shortly before by the death of his faithful friend Goodwin, and of his old master, Pavhari Baba (June, 1898) prepared the way for this inner irruption of the Terrible Goddess.

to recall the explanation Vivekananda had given the previous year to his companions:

"The Totality of all souls—not the human alone—is the Personal God. The will of the Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as Law. And that is what we mean to say by Shiva, Kali and so on."[39]

But the powerful emotivity of the great Indian projected in images of fire that which in European brains remains at the reasoning stage. Never for an instant was his profound faith in the Advaita shaken. But by the inverse road to Ramakrishna, he reached the same pitch of universal comprehension—the same belvedere of thought—where man is at the same time the circumference and the centre: the totality of souls and each individual soul—and the A U M[40] containing them and becoming reabsorbed in the eternal *Nada*—the starting point and the end of a double unending movement. His brother monks from this time had some obscure inkling of his identity with Ramakrishna. Premananda asked him once:

"Is there any difference between you and Ramakrishna?"

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He returned to the monastery, to the new Math of Belur, and consecrated it on December 9, 1898. At Calcutta a few days before, on November 12, the day of the festival of the Mother, Nivedita's school for girls was opened. In spite of illness, and suffocating attacks of asthma, from which he emerged with his face blue like that of a drowning man, he pushed on the organisation of his Mission with Saradananda's help. The swarm was at work. Sanskrit, Oriental and Western philosophy, manual work and meditation alike were taught there. He himself set the example. After his lessons on metaphysics, he tilled the garden, dug a well and kneaded bread.[41] He was a living hymn of Work.

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[39] During his second voyage to Europe on the boat in sight of the coast of Sicily. (Cf. Talks with Nivedita, in the book: *The Master as I saw Him.*)

[40] Or O M, the sacred word. It is according to the old Hindu belief and the definition of Vivekananda himself, "the kernel of

. . . "Only a great monk (in the widest sense: a man vowed to the service of the Absolute) can be a great worker: for he is without attachments. . . . There were no greater workers than Buddha and Christ. . . . No work is secular. All work is adoration and worship. . . ."

Moreover there was no hierarchy in the forms of work. All useful work was noble. . . .

"If my *gurubhais* told me that I was to pass the rest of my life cleaning the drains of the Math, assuredly I should do it. He alone is a great leader who knows how to obey for the public good. . . ."

The first duty was "renunciation."

"Without renunciation no religion—(he might have said: 'no deep foundation of the spirit') can endure. . . ."

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all sounds and the symbol of Brahman. . . . The universe is created of this sound." *"Nada-Brahman,"* he said, "is the Brahman Sound," "the most subtle in the universe." (Cf. The Mantram: Om. Word and Wisdom; Bhakti Yoga. Complete Works of Vivekananda, III, 56-58.)

[41] He attached great importance to physical exercises:

"I want sappers and miners in the army of religion. So, boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles. For ascetics, mortification is all right, for workers, well developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel."

And the man who has "renounced," "the Sannyasin," so say the Vedas, "is supported on the head of the Vedas," "for he is freed from sects, churches and prophets." He dwells on God. God dwells in him. Let him only believe!

"The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the Divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself, death comes. Believe first in yourself, and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. . . ."

Then be brave. Bravery is the highest virtue. Dare to speak the whole truth always, "to all without distinction, without equivocation, without fear, without compromise. Do not trouble about the rich and great. The Sannyasin should have nothing to do with the rich. To pay respects to the rich and hang on to them for support is a conduct which becomes a public woman. The Sannyasin's duty is with the poor. He should treat the poor with loving care and serve them joyfully with all his might."

"If you seek your own salvation, you will go to hell. It is the salvation of others that you must seek . . . and even if you have to go to hell in working for others, that is worth more than to gain heaven by seeking your own salvation. . . . Sri Ramakrishna came and gave his life for the world. I will also sacrifice my life; you also, every one of you, should do the same. All these works and so forth are only a beginning. Believe me, from the shedding of our life-blood will arise gigantic, heroic workers and warriors of God who will revolutionise the whole world."

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero.

He felt himself dying. But

". . . life is a battle. Let me die fighting. Two years of physical suffering have taken from me twenty years of life. But the soul is unchanged. It is always here, the same fool, the fool with a single idea: Atman. . . ."

IX

THE SECOND JOURNEY TO THE WEST

He set out upon a second journey to the West in order to inspect the works he had founded and to fan the flame. This time he took with him [1] one of the most learned of his brethren, Turiyananda, a man of high caste, noble life, and learned in Sanskrit studies.

"The last time," he said, "they saw a warrior. Now I want to show them a Brahmin."

He left [2] under very different conditions from those of his return: in his emaciated body he carried a brazier of energy, breathing out action and combat, and so disgusted with the supineness of his devirilised people that on the boat in sight of Corsica he celebrated "the Lord of War." (Napoleon.)[3]

In his contempt for cowardice of soul he went so far as to prefer the vigour of crime,[4] and the older he grew the deeper his conviction that the East and the West must espouse each other. He saw in India and Europe "two organisms in full youth . . . two great experiments neither of which is yet complete." They ought to be mutually helpful but at the same time each must respect the free development of the other. He did not allow himself to criticise their weaknesses: both of them were at the ungrateful age. They ought to grow up hand in hand.[5]

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[1] Nivedita went with them.

[2] On June 2, 1899, he travelled from Calcutta by Madras, Colombo, Aden, Naples, Marseilles. On July 21 he was in London. On August 16 he left Glasgow for New York. He stayed in the United States until July 20, 1900, chiefly in California. From August 1 to October 24 he visited France, and went to Paris and Brittany. Then by Vienna, the Balkans, Constantinople, Greece, Egypt he returned to India, and arrived at the beginning of December, 1900.

[3] He recalled also the energy of Robespierre. He was full of the epic history of Europe. Before Gibraltar his imagination saw on the shore the galloping horses of the Moors and the great Arab invasion disembarking.

[4] When people spoke of the rarity of crime in India he cried, "Would God it were otherwise in my land! For this is verily the

When he returned to India a year and a half afterwards he was almost entirely detached from life, and all violence had gone out of him, exorcised by the brutal face he had this time unveiled in Western Imperialism;

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virtuousness of death." "The older I grow," he added, "the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness; this is my new Gospel." He went so far as to say, "Do even evil like a man. Be wicked if you must, on a great scale!"

These words must be taken, it goes without saying (spoken as they were on the boat to sure and tried friends who were not likely to misunderstand them) as one of those linguistic thunderbolts, whereby the Kshatrya, the spiritual warrior, fulminated against the shifting sands of the East. The true sense is probably that which I read in an old Italian motto: *"Ignavia est jacere."* The vilest of crime is not to act.

[5] Cf. the Interviews recorded by Nivedita. That which emerges most clearly is his "universal" sense. He had hopes of democratic America, he was enthusiastic over the Italy of art culture and liberty—the great mother of Mazzini. He spoke of China as the treasury of the world. He fraternised with the martyred Babists of Persia. He embraced in equal love the India of the Hindus, the Mohammedans, and the Buddhists. He was fired by the Mogul Empire: when he spoke of Akbar the tears came into his eyes. He could comprehend and defend the grandeur of Genghiz Khan and his dream of Asiatic unity. He made Buddha the subject of a magnificent eulogy: "I am the servant of the servants of Buddha . . ."

His intuition of the unity of the human race did not stop at the arbitrary divisions of races and nations. It made him say that he had seen in the West some of the best Hindu types, and in India the best Christians.

he had seen its eyes full of rapacious hatred. He had realised that during his first journey he had been caught by the power, the organisation, and the apparent democracy of America and Europe. Now he had discovered the spirit of lucre, of greed, of Mammon, with its enormous combinations, and ferocious struggle for supremacy. He was capable of rendering homage to the grandeur of a mighty association. . . .

"But what beauty of combination was there amongst a pack of wolves?"

"Western life," said a witness, "seemed hell to him. . . ." Material brilliance no longer deceived him. He saw the hidden tragedy, the weariness under the forced expenditure of energy, the deep sorrow under the frivolous mask. He said to Nivedita:

"Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter: but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface; really it is full of tragic intensity. . . . Here (in India) it is sad and gloomy on the surface, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."[6]

How had this all too prophetic vision come to him? When and where had his glance, stripping the bark from the tree, and revealing the canker gnawing at the heart of the West despite all its outward glory, foreseen the monster of the days of hate and agony that were approaching, and the years of wars and revolutions?[7]

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[6] *The Master as I saw Him,* p. 145, 3rd edition.

[7] Sister Christine has just revealed to us in her unpublished Memoirs, that even during his first voyage in 1895 Vivekananda had seen the tragedy of the West:

"Europe is on the edge of a volcano. If the fire is not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will erupt."

Sister Christine has also given us another striking instance of prophetic intuition:

"Thirty two years ago (that is in 1896) he said to me: 'the

Nobody knows. The record of his journey was only kept spasmodically. This time there was no Goodwin with him. Apart from one or two intimate letters, the most beautiful being one from Alameda to Miss MacLeod, we have to regret that nothing is known save his movements and the success of his mission.

After having broken his journey only in London he went to the United States and stayed for almost a year. There he found Abhedananda with his Vedantic work in full swing. He settled Turiyananda down at Cambridge. He himself decided to go to California on account of its climate from which he regained several months of health. There he gave numerous lectures.[8] He founded new Vedic centres at San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. He received the gift of a property of five hundred acres of forest land in the district of Santa Clara, and there he created an Ashram, where Turiyananda trained a select band of students in the monastic life. Nivedita, who rejoined him, also spoke in New York on the ideas of Hindu women, and on the ancient arts of India. Ramakrishna's small but well-chosen band was very active. The work prospered, and its ideals spread.

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next upheaval that is to usher in another era will come from Russia or from China. I cannot see clearly which, but it will be either the one or the other.' "

And again: "The world is in the third epoch under the domination of Vaioya (the merchant, the third estate). The fourth epoch will be under that of Sudra (the proletariat)."

[8] Notably at Pasadena on *Christ the Messenger,* at Los Angeles on *Applied Psychology,* at San Francisco on the *Ideal of a Universal Religion,* and on the *Gita,* in other Californian towns, on *The Message of Buddha, Christ, and Krishna to the World,* on the *Arts and Sciences of India,* and the *Powers* of the Spirit . . . etc. Unfortunately many of the lectures have been lost. He did not find a second Goodwin to write them down.

But their leader, three parts of him, no longer belonged to this world. The shadows were rising round the oak. . . . Were they shadows, or reflections of another light? They were no longer those of our sun. . . .

"Pray for me that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in the Mother. . . . I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things and am waiting for the Great Deliverer. Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore! . . . I am only the young boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan of Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works, and activities, doing good and so forth are all superior portions. . . . Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling . . . 'Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou me'. . . . 'I come, my Beloved Lord, I come!' . . . Nirvana is before me. . . . The same Ocean of peace without a ripple, or a breath. . . . I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders,—glad to enter peace. I leave none bound; I take no bonds. . . . The old man is gone, gone for ever. The guide, the Guru, the leader . . . passed away. . . ."

In that marvellous climate, under the glorious sun of California, in its tropical vegetation, his athletic will relaxed its hold, his weary being sank into a dream, body and soul let themselves drift. . . .

"I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet for fear of hurting the wonderful stillness,—stillness that makes you feel that it is an illusion. Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. . . . I come, Mother, I come in thy warm bosom,—floating wheresoever Thou takest me,—in the voiceless, the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor. Oh! it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint distant whispers, and Peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling asleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows, without fear, without love, without emotion. . . . I come, Lord! The world is, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotions. Oh! the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful, for they are all losing their relative proportions to me,—my body among the first. . . . O M that existence." . . . ![9]

The arrow was still flying, carried by the original impetus of movement, but it was reaching the dead end where it knew that it would fall to the ground. . . . How sweet was the moment "a few minutes before falling asleep"—the downfall—when the tyrannous urge of destiny that had driven him was spent; and the arrow floated in the air, free of both the bow and the mark. . . .

The arrow of Vivekananda was finishing its trajectory. He crossed the Ocean on July 20, 1900. He went to Paris, where he had been invited to a Congress on the History of Religions, held on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition. This was no Parliament of

[9] Letter to Miss MacLeod, April 18, 1900, Alameda. *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III. pp. 392-3.

Religions as at Chicago. The Catholic power would not have allowed it. It was purely a historical and scientific Congress. At the point of liberation at which Vivekananda's life had arrived, his intellectual interest, but not his true passion or entire being, could find nourishment in it. He was charged by the Committee of the Congress to argue the question whether the Vedic religion came from Nature worship. He debated with Oppert. He spoke on the Vedas, the common basis of Hinduism and Buddhism. He upheld the priority of the Gita and of Krishna over Buddhism, and rejected the thesis of Hellenic influence on the drama, the letters and the sciences of India.

But most of his time was given up to French culture. He was struck by the intellectual and social importance of Paris. In an article for India,[10] he said that "Paris is the centre and the source of European culture," that there the ethics and society of the West were formed, that its University was the model of all other Universities. "Paris is the home of liberty, and she has infused new life into Europe."

He also spent some time at Lannion, with his friend, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Sister Nivedita.[11] On St. Michael's Day he visited Mont St. Michel. He became more and more convinced of the resemblance between Hinduism and Roman Catholicism.[12] Moreover, he discovered Asiatic blood, mingled in different degrees even in the races of Europe. Far from feeling that there was a fundamental natural difference between Europe and Asia, he was convinced that deep contact between Europe and Asia would inevitably lead to a renaissance of Europe; for she would renew her vital stock of spiritual ideas from the East.

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[10] *"The East and the West."*

[11] Nivedita went away a short time afterwards to speak in England for the cause of Hindu women. Vivekananda, when he blessed her at her departure said these strong words to her:

"If I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!"

[12] He loved to say that "Christianity was not alien to the Hindu spirit."

It is to be regretted that only Father Hyacinthe and Jules Bois should have been the guides of so penetrating a spectator of the moral life of the West in Paris in his researches into the mind of France.[13]

He left again on October 24 for the East by Vienna and Constantinople.[14] But no other town interested him after Paris. He made a striking remark about Austria as he passed through it: he said that "if the Turk was the sick man, she was the sick woman of Europe." Europe both repelled and wearied him. He smelt war. The stench of it rose on all sides. "Europe," he said, "is a vast military camp. . . ."

Although he halted a short time on the shores of the Bosphorus to have Interviews with Sufi monks—then in Greece with its memories of Athens and Eleusis—and finally in the museum of Cairo, he was more and more detached from the spectacle of external things, and buried in meditation. Nivedita said that during his last months in the West he sometimes gave the impression of being completely indifferent to all that was going on. His soul was soaring towards wider horizons. In Egypt he said that he seemed to be turning the last pages of experience.

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[13] But he met Patrick Geddes in Paris and his great compatriot, the biologist, Jagadis Chunder Bose, whose genius he admired, and defended against all attack. He also met the strange Hiram Maxim, whose name is commemorated in an engine of destruction, but who deserves a better fate than such murderous fame, against which he himself protested; he was a great connoisseur and lover of China and India.

[14] Miss MacLeod, Father Hyacinthe, who wished to work for a rapprochement between Christians and Mohammedans in the East, Madame Loyson, Jules Bois, and Mme. Calve accompanied him, a strange escort for a Sannyasin, who was leaving the world and life with giant strides. Perhaps his detachment itself made him more indulgent or perhaps more indifferent.

Suddenly he heard the imperious call to return. Without waiting a single day he took the first steamer and came back alone to India.[15] He brought his body back to the funeral pyre.

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[15] At the beginning of December 1900.

X

THE DEPARTURE

His old and faithful friend had just gone before him. Mr. Sevier had died on October 28 in the Himalayas at the Ashram he had built. Vivekananda heard the news on his arrival, but he had had a presentiment of it during his return voyage. Without stopping to rest at Belur, he telegraphed to Mayavati that he was coming to the Ashram. At that time of the year access to the Himalayas was difficult, and dangerous, especially for a man in Vivekananda's state of health. It necessitated a four days march through the snow, and the winter was particularly severe that year. Without waiting for coolies and necessary porters to be collected, he departed with two of his monks; and was joined on the way by an escort sent from the Ashram; but amid the falling snow and the mist and the clouds he could scarcely walk; he was suffocated; his anxious companions carried him to the convent of Mayavati with great difficulty. He arrived on January 3, 1901, and despite the mingled joy and emotion that he felt at meeting Mrs. Sevier again, in seeing the work finished, and in contemplating the beautiful Ashram perched on the snow mountains, he could only stay for a fortnight; asthma suffocated him; the least physical effort exhausted him. "My body is done for," he said. And on January 13 he celebrated his thirty-eighth birthday. His spirit, however, was always vigorous.[1] In this Advaita Ashram, consecrated by his wish to the contemplation of the Absolute alone, he discovered a hall dedicated to the worship of Ramakrishna. And he, the passionate disciple of Ramakrishna, who had never shown more complete adoration for the Master than in these last years, was indignant at his cult, a sacrilege in such a place. He vehemently reminded his followers that no dualistic religious weakness ought to find a foothold in a sanctuary devoted to the highest spiritual Monism.[2]

The same fever that had driven him to come, drove him to go. Nothing could hold him back. He left Mayavati on January 18, travelled on horseback for four days over slippery slopes in the snow and reentered his monastery of Belur on January 24.[3]

Apart from a last pilgrimage that he made with his mother to the holy places of Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Dakka, and Shillong,[4] and whence he returned exhausted, he only left Belur for a short stay at Benares at the beginning of 1902. The great journey of his life was ended. . . .

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[1] He wrote from Mayavati between attacks of suffocation, three Essays for the *Prabuddha Bharata* (of which one was upon Theosophy, never a friend of his).

[2] On his return to Belur he again almost despairingly reiterated his dissatisfaction at having found "the old man established at the Ashram . . ." Surely it was possible for one single centre free from dualism to exist. He reminded them that such worship was against Ramakrishna's own thought. It was through the teaching and at the wish of Ramakrishna that Vivekananda had become an Advaitist. Ramakrishna was all Advaita, he preached Advaita. "Why do you not follow the Advaita?"

[3] Certainly the Kshatrya had lost none of his fighting spirit. In the train coming back an English colonel rudely showed his disgust at having a Hindu in his compartment, and tried to make him get out. Vivekananda's rage burst forth and it was the colonel who had to give up his place and go elsewhere.

[4] In March 1901. He gave several lectures at Dakka. At Shillong, the seat of the Assam Government, he found broad-minded Englishmen, among them the Chief Commissioner, Sir Henry Cotton, a defender of the Indian cause. This last tour through countries of fanatical religious conservatism threw into

"What does it matter," he said proudly, "I have done enough for fifteen hundred years!"

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At the monastery he occupied a big airy room on the second floor, with three doors and four windows.[5]

"In front the broad river (the Ganges) is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo-boat breaking the silence with the splashing of the oars. . . . Everything is green and gold, and the grass is like velvet. . . ."[6]

He led a country life, a kind of sacred bucolic like a Franciscan monk. He worked in the garden, and the stables. Like the ascetics of Shakuntala he was surrounded by his favourite animals; the dog, Bagha, the deer Hansi, the kid Matru, with a collar of little bells with which he ran and played like a child, an antelope, a stork, ducks and geese, cows and sheep.[7] He walked

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high relief the manly liberty of his own religious conceptions. He recalled to these Hindu bigots that the true way to see God was to see Him in man, that it was useless to vegetate on the past—however glorious it might be—that it was necessary to do better, to become even greater rishis. He treated enlightened beings who believed themselves to be pseudo-Avatars most irreverently. He advised them to eat more and develop their muscles.

[5] It has been kept as at the day of his death; an iron bed, on which he rarely reclined preferring the ground; a writing table, a carpet for meditation, a great mirror . . . His life sized portrait and that of Ramakrishna have been added.

[6] Letter of December 19, 1900.

[7] The rains have come down in earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring, pouring, night and day. The river is rising . . . I

about as in an ecstasy, singing in his beautiful, rich deep voice, or repeating certain words that charmed him without heeding the passage of time.

But he knew also how to be the great abbot guiding the monastery with a firm hand in spite of his sufferings. Almost daily until his death he gave Vedantic classes to teach the novices the methods of meditation, he inspired the workers with a spirit of virile confidence in themselves, paid strict attention to discipline and cleanliness, drew up a weekly timetable and kept a watchful eye upon the regularity of all the acts of the day; no negligence escaped the eye of the Master.[8] Round him he kept an heroic atmosphere, a "burning bush" of the soul, in the midst whereof God was always

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have just returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water . . . My huge stork is full of glee. My tame antelope fled from the Math . . . One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday . . . One of the geese was losing her feathers . . .

The animals adored him. Matru, the little kid, who had been (so he pretended) one of his parents in a previous existence, slept in his room. Before milking Hansi, he always asked her permission. Bagha, who took part in the Hindu ceremonies, went to bathe in the Ganges when the gongs and conches announced the end of an eclipse.

[8] The bell sounded at fixed hours. For awaking at four in the morning. Half an hour afterwards the monks had to be in chapel for meditation. But he was always before them. He got up at three, and went to the hall of worship, where he sat, facing the north, his hands clasped on his breast, meditating motionless for more than two hours. Nobody got up from his place until he set the example, saying, "Shiva, Shiva . . ." He walked about in a state of serene exaltation, communicating it to all around him . . . One day when he came in unexpectedly and found only two monks in the chapel, he imposed on the whole convent, even on the greatest monks, a penitential fast for the rest of the day and forced them to beg their food. He supervised in like manner the publications of the Order and let none of what he called "these stupidities" pass—articles of exaggerated sentimentalism or strict sectarianism, the two things in the world he found it most difficult to forgive.

present. Once when he saw them going to worship as he was in the middle of the court under a tree, he said to them:

"Where shall you go to seek Brahman? . . . He is immanent in all beings. *Here, here* is the visible Brahman! Shame to those who, neglecting the visible Brahman, set their minds on other things. Here is the Brahman before you, as tangible as a fruit in one's hand. Can't you see? Here, here, here is the Brahman! . . ."

And so forceful was his utterance that each received a kind of shock and remained for nearly a quarter of an hour glued to the spot as if petrified. Vivekananda at last had to say to them:

"Now go to worship!" [9]

But his illness steadily increased. Diabetes took the form of hydropsy: his feet swelled and certain parts of his body became keenly hypersensitive. He hardly slept at all. The Doctor wished to stop all exertion, and made him follow a most painful regime; although forbidden to drink any water, he submitted with stoical patience. For twenty-one days he did not swallow a single drop even when he rinsed out his mouth. He declared:

"The body is only a mask of the mind. What the mind dictates the body *will have* to obey. Now I do not even *think* of water, I do not miss it at all. . . . I see I can do anything."

The illness of its head did not stop the work or the festivals of the convent. He wished the latter to be ritualistic and sumptuous; for his free mind, which ignored scandal if it was a case of social reform, kept a tender regard for the legendary poetry of beautiful ceremonies, which maintained the stream of living faith[10] in the heart of simple believers, however gravely he fell foul of the inhuman orthodoxy of bigots.[11]

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[9] The end of 1901.

So in October 1901 the great festival of *Durga Puja* —the adoration of the Mother,[12] the national festival of Bengal, corresponding to our Christmas, celebrated with great magnificence the joys of the scented autumn when men are reconciled to each other and exchange gifts and the monastery feeds hundreds of poor for three days. In February 1902 the festival of Ramakrishna brought together more than thirty thousand pilgrims to Belur. But the Swami was feverish and confined to his room by the swelling of his legs. From his window he watched the dances, the Samkirtans, and sought to comfort the tears of the disciple who was nursing him; alone with his memories he lived again the days he had spent in the past at the feet of the Master at Dakshineswar.

One great joy still remained to him. Okakura,[13] an illustrious visitor, came to see him. He arrived with the Japanese abbot of a Buddhist convent, Oda, and invited him to the next Congress of Religions. The meeting was a moving one. The two men acknowledged their kinship.

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[10] Miss MacLeod told me: "Vivekananda was personally indifferent to ritualistic customs; and refused to be bound by them in social life. But he authorised ritualism, even in Hindu meals, where part is offered to the Gods, and on festival days of the holy dead, when a place is reserved for them at table and meats served to them. He said that he realised such ritualism was necessary for the weakness of man; for, without prescribed and repeated acts he is incapable of keeping the memory and living impression of religious experience. He said, "Without it there would be nothing but intellect here (and he touched his forehead) and dry thought."

[11] During the early days of the monastery the orthodox of the neighbouring villages were scandalised, and slandered the monks of Belur. Vivekananda when he heard it, said "That is good. It is a law of nature. That is the case with all founders of religion. Without persecution superior ideas cannot penetrate into the heart of society."

[12] But the sacrifice of animals was abolished.

[13] At the end of 1901.

"We are," said Vivekananda, "two brothers who meet again having come from the ends of the earth." [14]

Okakura begged Vivekananda to accompany him to the ruins of Bhodgaya of famous memory, and Vivekananda, taking advantage of several weeks respite from his malady, accepted his invitation and went to see Benares for the last time.[15]

. . . . .

The talks, plans and desires expressed during his last year were faithfully collected by the disciples. He was always pre-occupied with the regeneration of India, while two of the projects nearest his heart were the foundation at Calcutta of a Vedic college, where eminent professors should teach the ancient Aryan culture and Sanskrit learning—and a monastery for women, analogous to that of Belur on the banks of the Ganges, under the direction of the "Holy Mother" (Ramakrishna's widow).

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[14] Told by Miss MacLeod, to whom Vivekananda confided the emotion he felt at this meeting.

[15] In January and February, 1902. They visited Bhodgaya together on Vivekananda's last birthday. At Benares Okakura left him. The two men, although they loved each other and acknowledged the grandeur of their mutual task, recognised these differences. Okakura had his own kingdom; that of art. At Benares Vivekananda found an association of young people who had been formed under his inspiration to help, feed, and care for sick pilgrims. He was proud of these children, and wrote an *"Appeal for the Ramakrishna Home of Service"* for them.

Count Keyserling who visited the site of the Ramakrishna Mission at Benares carried away with him a deep impression. I never have been in a hospital with a more cheerful atmosphere. The certainty of salvation sweetens all suffering. And the quality of the love for one's neighbours which animated the male nurses was exquisite. These men are truly real followers of Ramakrishna. . . ." (Journal of the Voyage of a Philosopher, Vol. I. of the English translation, p. 248.) Keyserling forgot that they had received their inspiration from Vivekananda whom he leaves completely in the dark, although he speaks all too briefly—but with understanding sympathy of Ramakrishna.

But his true spiritual testament is to be found in the beautiful confidences he made out of the abundance of his heart one day when he was talking to some Santal [16] workmen. They were poor folk, employed about the Monastery in digging the ground. Vivekananda loved them dearly; he mingled with a group of them, talking to them, making them talk, weeping in sympathy as they related their simple miseries. One day he served a beautiful feast for them at which he said:

"You are Narayana. To-day I have fed Narayana. . . ."

Then, turning towards his disciples, he said to them:

"See what simple hearts these poor illiterate people have! Would you be capable of bearing such misery? If not what is the use of wearing the *gerrua* (the ochre robe of Sannyasins)? . . . Sometimes I say to myself: What is the use of building monasteries? Why not sell them and distribute the money among the poor, indigent Narayanas? What need have we of a home, whose shelter ought to be a tree? Alas! how can we have the heart to carry food to our mouths, when our compatriots have not enough to eat or to clothe themselves? Will there never be compensation for them? . . . One of my aims in going to preach to the West was, as you know, to come to the help of the unfortunate people of our country. When I see their misery I think: let us reject all these fables and cults, these conches blown, and lights waved before the image. Let us reject all pride of learning and study of the Shastras, and all Sadhanas to attain personal Mukti! Let us go from village to village, and dedicate our lives to the service of the poor! Let us convince the rich of their duties towards the masses by the force of our character, by our spirituality, and austere life. . . . Alas, nobody in our country thinks of the poor, the humble, the unfortunate. Those who are the vertebral column of the nation, those whose work produces the food of all, those for whom it is enough for one day's strike to call up an immense cry of distress in the City—where is the man who sympathises with them, who shares their joys and their sufferings? . . . See how on account of the lack of sympathy of Hindus, thousands of pariahs have become Christians in the Presidency of Madras. It is not only the pangs of hunger that drive them, it is lack of sympathy. You are continually saying to them: 'Do not touch this or that. Do not touch me!' . . . Does one ounce of brotherly feeling or of dharma exist in this country? There is only Untouchableness. Send packing, at one blow, all such degrading customs! . . . Ah! how I long to demolish the barriers of Untouchableness, and reunite all people, to go out and cry: 'Come all ye who are poor and disinherited. Come ye who are trampled under foot! We are One in the name of Ramakrishna!' Until they are raised the Great Mother (India) will never awake. . . . For what good are we if we cannot help them, feed them, clothe them! Alas! they are unskilled in the ways of the world, and do not succeed in gaining a living, although they toil day and night. Join forces to tear the veil from their eyes. What I see as clearly as daylight is that the same Brahman, the same Shakti, is in them and in me. There is only one difference, the degree of manifestation. Have you ever in the history of the world seen a country grow and become great, if the circulation of blood was unequal throughout the body? Know this: No great work can be performed by a body wherein one member is paralysed. . . ."

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[16] The French reader will find in the first book of *Feuilles de l'Inde* (Chitra Publications, Edited by G. A. Hogman, Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1928) a series of interesting studies on the *Santals, an autochthonous Indian tribe,* contributed by Santosh C. Majumdar. It is believed that these people, having come into India originally from the North East settled at Champa (Bhagalpur) and then emigrated to Behar, where they live today, 250 kilometres from Calcutta. Akin to the Hos and the Mundars, old hunters and forest dwellers depending on agriculture for a livelihood, they practise an animist religion, and have preserved their ancient customs and a natural nobility, which has attracted the interest of many painters of the Calcutta school.

One of the lay disciples objected to the difficulty of establishing unity and harmony in India. Vivekananda replied with irritation:

"Do not come here if you find some task too difficult! By the grace of the Lord, all can be accomplished with ease. Your duty is to serve the unfortunate and the poor without distinction of caste or belief. Must you consider the fruits of your action? Your duty is to continue to work: and all will come right in time. . . . You are all intelligent boys, you pretend to be my disciples . . . Tell me this: What have you done? Cannot you throw away one life for the love of others? Leave to the next life the reading of the Vedanta and the practice of meditation. Let this body which is here be put at the service of others! And then I shall know that you have not come to me in vain!"

A little later he said:

"After so much tapasya (asceticism) I have come to realise that the highest truth is this: He is present in all beings. They are all His multiple forms. There is no other God to seek. He alone serves God who serves all other beings! . . ."

The great thought is there stripped to its essentials. Like the setting sun it breaks forth from the clouds before disappearing in resplendent glory: the Equality of all men, all sons of the same God, all bearing the same God. And there is no other God. He who wishes to serve God, must serve man—and in the first instance man in the humblest, poorest, most degraded form. Break down the barriers. Reply to the inhumanity of "Untouchability," which though most cruelly apparent in India is not peculiar to that country (the hypocrisy of Europe has also its pariahs, whose contact she flees), by outstretched hands and the cry of the Ode to Joy—Brother! . . .

Vivekananda's disciples have obeyed the call. The Ramakrishna Mission has been unremitting in coming to the help of the poor and the outcast [17] and in particular it watches over the Santals whom its dying Swami confided to its care.

Another has received the torch from the hands of him who cried: "Come all ye, the poor and the disinherited! Come ye who are trampled under foot! We are One!" and has taken up the holy struggle to give back to the untouchables their rights and their dignity—M. K. Gandhi.

As he lay dying his great pride realised the vanity of pride, and discovered true greatness to lie in little things: "The humble heroic life." [18]

"As I grow older," he had said to Nivedita, "I find that I look more and more for greatness in *little* things . . . Anyone will be great in a great position. Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the footlights. The world looks on! . . . More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, doing its duty silently, steadily from moment to moment and hour to hour."

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[17] A chapter devoted to the works of the Ramakrishna Mission will be found at the end of the second part of this volume.

[18] I have given this title to a collection of thoughts.

He looked death in the face, unafraid, as it drew near, and remembered all his disciples, even those across the seas. His tranquillity was a delusion for them: They thought that he had still three or four years of life, when he himself knew that he was on the eve of departure, but he showed no regret for having to leave his work in other hands:

"How often," he said, "does a man ruin his disciples by remaining always with them!"

He felt it necessary that he should go away from them, so that they might develop by themselves. He refused to express any opinion on the questions of the day:

"I can no more enter into outside affairs," he said, "I am already on the way."

On the supreme day, Friday, July 4, 1902, he was more vigorous and joyous than he had been for years. He rose very early. Going to the chapel, contrary to his habit of opening everything, he shut the windows and bolted the doors. There he meditated alone from eight to eleven o'clock in the morning. When he went out into the court he was transfigured; he talked aloud to himself and sang his beautiful hymn to Kali. He ate his meal with an appetite in the midst of his disciples, immediately afterwards he gave the novices a Sanskrit lesson for three hours, and was full of life and humour. Then he walked with Premananda along the

Belur road for more than two miles; he spoke of his plan of a Vedic College and talked of Vedic study:

"It will kill superstition," he said.

Evening came—He had a last affectionate interview with his monks, and spoke of the rise and fall of nations.

"India is immortal," he said "if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict she will die." [19]

Seven o'clock. . . . The convent bell struck for Arati (worship). . . . He went into his room, and looked out over the Ganges. Then he sent away the novice who was with him, desiring that his meditation should be undisturbed. Forty-five minutes later he called in his monks, had all the windows opened, lay down quietly on the floor on his left side and remained motionless. He seemed to be meditating. At the end of an hour he turned round, gave a deep breath—there was silence for several seconds—his eyes were fixed in the middle of his eyelids—a second deep sigh . . . and eternal silence fell.

"There was," said the novice, "a little blood in his nostrils, about his mouth and in his eyes."

It seemed as if he had gone away in a voluntary fit of *Kundalini shakti* [20]—in the final great ecstasy, which Ramakrishna had promised him only when his task should be ended.[21]

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[19] Miss MacLeod repeated these words to me.

[20] One of the talks of the day had been concerned with the current *Souchouma,* which rises through the six "Lotus" of the body. (See the end of Vol. I, *the Life of Ramakrishna,* Note I on the Psycho-physiology of Indian Asceticism.)

[21] I have tried to combine in my account the different accounts of eye-witnesses, which only differ in details. The doctors consulted, of whom one arrived two hours before life had completely

He was thirty-nine.[22]

The next day, like Ramakrishna, he was carried to the pyre on the shoulders of the Sannyasins, his brothers, amid shouts of victory.

And in thought I can hear as in his triumphal progress at Ramnad, the chorus of Judas Maccabeus, greeting the mighty athlete after his last contest.

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expired, said that death was due to heart failure and apoplexy. But the monks keep the firm belief that death was an act of will. And the two explanations do not clash. Sister Nivedita only arrived the next day.

[22] He had said, "I shall not live to be forty years old."

PART II

THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL OF VIVEKANANDA

"'I am the thread that runs through all these various ideas, each of which is like a pearl,' says the Lord Krishna."

I

MAYA
AND THE MARCH TOWARDS FREEDOM

It is no part of my present intention to enter into an argument about the thought of the two great Indians, whose lives I have just related. The material of Vivekananda's ideas was no more his own personal conquest than in the case of Ramakrishna. It belongs to the thought inherent in the depths of Hinduism. The simple and modest Ramakrishna made no claim to the honour of founding a school of metaphysics. And Vivekananda, though more intellectual and therefore more conscious of his doctrine, knew and maintained that there was nothing new in it. On the contrary he would have been inclined to defend it on the strength of its exalted spiritual ancestry.

"I am Sankara!" he said.

They would both have smiled at the illusion, so general in this age, that makes a man believe himself the inventor or proprietor of some form of thought. We know that the thoughts of mankind move within a narrow circle, and that, although they alternately appear and disappear, they are always there. Moreover, those which seem to us the newest are often in reality the most ancient; it is only that they have been longer forgotten by the world.

So I am not prepared to embark upon the vast and profitless task of discussing the Hinduism of the Paramahamsa and his great disciple; for if I wished to probe to the depths of the question, I should be unable to confine myself to Hinduism. The essential part of their experience and mystic conception, as well as the metaphysical construction of which these are at the same time the foundation and the keystone, far from being peculiar to India as she tends to believe, are held by her in common with the two great religious metaphysical systems of the West, the Hellenic and the Christian. The Divine Infinity, the Absolute God, immanent and transcendent, who is poured out in the constant flood of the *Natura Rerum,* and yet is concentrated in the most minute of its particles,—the Divine Revelation, diffused throughout the universe and yet inscribed in the centre of each soul,—the great Paths of reunion with the Infinite Force, in particular that of. total Negation,—the "deification" of the enlightened soul, after its identification with Unity—these are all explained by Plotinus of Alexandria and by the early masters of Christian mysticism with an ordered power and beauty, which need fear no comparison with the monumental structure of India. On the other hand Indian mystics would do well to study it.

But obviously within the limits of this work, I cannot give so much as a bird's eye view of the historic variations that have taken place in the conception of the Divine Infinity and in the great science of union with the Absolute. It would require a history of the whole world; for such ideas belong to the very flesh of humanity past, present and future. Their character is universal and eternal. I cannot begin to discuss even the question of their worth (problematical as are all the ideas of the human spirit without exception), or the question bound up with it, that of the great scientific problem of "Introversion." They would need a whole work to themselves. I shall content myself with referring the reader to a twofold and fairly lengthy Note at the end of the volume. The first part deals with Mystic "Introversion" and the singular mistakes made in its appreciation by modern psycho-pathologists: for they ignore its strictly scientific elements, and the considerable weight of evidence already registered for its true perception and understanding. The second part is devoted to the Hellenic-Christian Mysticism of the first centuries (Plotinus, Denis the Areopagite) and its relation to Indian Mysticism. I shall confine myself here to a summary of Vedantic thought, as it has been explained in these modern days through the mouth of Vivekananda.

All great doctrine as it recurs periodically in the course of the centuries is coloured by reflections of the age wherein it reappears; and it further receives the imprint of the individual soul through which it runs. Thus it emerges anew to work upon men of the age. Every idea as a pure idea remains in an elementary stage, like electricity dispersed in the atmosphere, unless it finds the mighty condenser of personality. It must become incarnate like the gods. *"Et caro factus est."*

It is this mortal flesh of the immortal idea that gives it its temporary aspect of belonging to a day or a century, whereby it is communicated to us.

I shall try to show how closely allied is the aspect of Vivekananda's thought to our own, with our special needs, torments, aspirations, and doubts, urging us ever forward, like a blind mole, by instinct upon the road leading to the light. Naturally I hope to be able to make other Westerners, who resemble me, feel the attraction that I feel for this elder brother, the son of the Ganges, who of all modern men achieved the highest equilibrium between the diverse forces of thought, and was one of the first to sign a treaty of peace between the two forces eternally warring within us, the forces of reason and faith.

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If there is one sentiment that is absolutely essential to me (and I speak as the representative of thousands of Europeans) it is that of Freedom. Without it nothing has any value . . . *"Das Wesen des Geistes ist die Freheit."* [1]

But those who are best qualified to estimate its unique value are those who have known most fully the suffering of chains, either those of especially crushing circumstances or the torments of their own nature. Before I was seven years old the universe of a sudden seemed to me to be a vast rat trap wherein I was caught. From that moment all my efforts were directed to escape through the bars—until one day in my youth under slow and constant pressure one bar suddenly gave way and I sprang to freedom.[2]

These spiritual experiences which marked me for life, brought me singularly near to the spirit of India when later I came to know it. For thousands of years she has felt herself entangled in a gigantic net, and for thousands of years she has sought for some way to escape through the meshes. This ceaseless effort to escape from a closed trap has communicated a passion for freedom, ever fresh, ardent and untiring (for it is always in danger) to all Indian geniuses whether Gods incarnate, wise philosophers or poets; but I know few examples so striking as the personality of Vivekananda.

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[1] "The essence of the spirit is liberty." (Hegel.)

[2] I have related these experiences in a chapter of intimate memories as yet unpublished: *The Inner Voyage,* which so far has only been shown to my Indian friends.

The sweeping strokes of his wild bird's wings took him, like Pascal, across the whole heaven of thought from one pole to the other, from the abyss of servitude to the gulf of freedom. Listen to his tragic cry as he conjures up the chain of rebirth.

"Why! the memory of our life is like millions of years of confinement, and they want to wake up the memory of many lives! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. . . ."[3]

But later he extols the splendour of existence:

"Never forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which *I am*."[4]

Therein lies no contradiction. For Vivekananda the two conditions are co-existent in man. "What is this universe? . . . In freedom it rises, in freedom it rests."[5] And yet with each movement every living being makes the chains of slavery eat more deeply into his flesh. But the dissonance of the two sentiments blends into harmony—a harmonious dissonance as in Heraclitus, which is the opposite of the serene and sovereign homophony of the Buddha. Buddhism says to men:

"Realise that all this is illusion,"

while the Vedantic Advaitist says:

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[3] 1899, during his second journey to the West.

[4] 1895, in an Interview at the Thousand Isles Park, in America.

[5] 1896, lectures on Maya, delivered in London.

"Realise that in illusion is the real!"[6]

Nothing in the world is to be denied, for Maya, Illusion, has its own reality. We are caught in the network of phenomena. Perhaps it would be a higher and more radical wisdom to cut the net, like Buddha, by total negation, and to say:

"They do not exist."

But in the light of the poignant joys and tragic sorrows, without which life would be poor indeed, it is more human, more precious to say:

"They exist. They are a snare."

And to raise the eyes from the mirror that is used to snare larks, and so to discover that it is all the play of the sun. The play of the sun, Brahman, is Maya, the huntress with Nature, her net.[7]

Before going further let us rid ourselves of the equivocation, inherent in the very name of Maya for even the most learned men of the West, and see how she is conceived by the intellectual Vedantism of the present day; for as it stands it raises a fictitious barrier between us. We are wrong to think of it as total illusion, pure hallucination, vain smoke without a fire: for it is this idea that makes us keep the derogatory opinion that the East is incapable of facing the reality of life, and sees in it nothing but the stuff that dreams are made of, a conception that leads it to float through life, half asleep motionless and supine, eyes fixed on the blue depths, like webs of wandering spiders floating in the autumn breeze.

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[6] Talks of Vivekananda with Nivedita in London (1900).

[7] In his first lecture upon *Maya and Illusion* Vivekananda went back to the original meaning of the word in India, where it implied a kind of magic illusion, a fog covering reality; and he quoted the words of one of the last Upanishads (the Svetasvatara Upanishad) "Know Nature to be Maya and the Ruler of this Maya is the Lord Himself."

(Complete Works, Vol. II, p. 88-89.)

But I believe I am faithful to the real thought of modern Vedantism, as it was incarnate in Vivekananda, when I prove that his conception of Nature was not vastly different from that of modern science.[8]

The true Vedantic spirit does not start out with a system of preconceived ideas. It has always possessed absolute liberty and unrivalled courage among religions with regard to the facts to be observed and the diverse hypotheses it has laid down for their co-ordination. Never having been hampered by a priestly order each man has been entirely free to search wherever he pleased for the spiritual explanation of the spectacle of the universe. As Vivekananda reminded his listeners, there was a time when believers, atheists, and downright materialists could be found preaching their doctrines side by side in the same temple; and further on I shall show what esteem Vivekananda publicly professed for the great materialists of Western science. "Liberty," he said, "is the sole condition of spiritual progress." Europe has known how to achieve it (or to demand it) more effectively than India in the realm of politics,[9] but she has attained it and even imagined it infinitely less in the spiritual realm. The mutual misunderstanding and intolerance of our so-called "free thinkers" and of our diverse religious professions has no longer the power to astonish us: the normal attitude of the average European may be summed up as "I am Truth!", while the great Vedantist would prefer as his motto Whitman's "All is Truth."[10] He does not reject any one of the proposed attempts at explanation but from each he seeks to extract the grain of permanent reality: hence when brought face to face with modern science he regards it as the purest manifestation of true religious sense—for it is seeking to seize the essence of Truth by profound and sincere effort.

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[8] Vivekananda has devoted to the special study of Maya a set of four lectures delivered in London in 1896: 1. *Maya and Illusion;* 2. *Maya and the Conception of God;* 3. *Maya and Freedom;* 4. *The Absolute and Manifestation* (that is to say, the phenomenal world). He returned frequently to the subject in the course of his interviews and his other philosophic and religious treatises.

[9] At the moment she is using the same energy to crush it. And bourgeois democracies, while still maintaining "parliamentary" etiquette, are not in this respect behind communist or fascist dictators.

The conception of Maya is viewed from this standpoint. "It is not," said Vivekananda, "a theory for the explanation of the world.[11] It is purely and simply a statement of fact" to be observed of all observers. "It is what we are, and what we see," so let us experiment. We are placed in a world which can be reached only through the doubtful medium of the mind and senses. This world only exists in relation to them. If they change it will also change. The existence we give it has no unchangeable, immovable, absolute reality. It is an indefinable mixture of reality and appearance, of certainty and illusion. It cannot be the one without the other. And there is nothing Platonic about this contradiction! It seizes us by the throat at every minute throughout our life of passion and action—It has been perceived throughout the ages by all the clear-thinking minds of the universe. It is the very condition of our knowledge. Though we are unceasingly called to the solution of insoluble problems the key to which seems as necessary to our existence as love or food, we cannot pass the circle of atmosphere imposed by nature itself upon our lungs. And the eternal contradictions between our aspirations and the wall enclosing them—between two orders having no common measure—between contradictory realities, the implacable and real fact of death and the no less real, immediate and undeniable consciousness of life,—between the irrevocable working of certain intellectual and moral laws and the perpetual flux of all the conceptions of the spirit and heart—the incessant variations of good and evil, of truth and falsehood on both sides of a line in space and time[12]—the whole coil of serpents wherein from the beginning of time the Laocoon of human thought has found itself intertwined so that as it unties itself on one side it only ties its knots more tightly on the other—all this is the real world. And the real world is Maya.

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[10] In the collection, *From Noon to Starry Night* from *Leaves of Grass.*

[11] It would be more exact to say, if criticism is allowed, that it is a fact of observation, insufficiently explained, if not actually unexplained, as most Vedantic philosophers agree. (Cf. for example the most recent exposition of Vedantism by Dr. Mahendranath Sirker, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta: *Comparative studies in Vedantism.* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, 1928).

How then can it be defined? Only by a word that Science has made fashionable in these latter days—Relativity. In Vivekananda's day it had hardly appeared above the horizon; its light was not yet bright enough to fill the dark sky of scientific thought; and Vivekananda only uses it incidentally.[13] But it is clear that it gives the precise meaning of his conception; and the passage I have just quoted in the form of a note leaves no room for doubt on the subject. Nothing but the mode of expression differs. Vedantic Advaitism (that is to say, impersonal and absolute Monism) of which he is the greatest modern representative, declares that Maya cannot be defined as non-existence any more than it can be defined as existence. It is an intermediate form between the equally absolute Being and non-Being. Hence it is the Relative. It is not Existence, for, says the Hindu Vedantist, it is the sport of the Absolute. It is not non-Existence, because this sport exists and we cannot deny it. For the type of man, so common in the West, who is content with the game from which he may derive profit, it is the sum total of existence: the great revolving Wheel bounds their horizon. But for great hearts the only existence worthy of the name is that of the Absolute. They are impelled to lay hold of it to escape from the Wheel. The cry of humanity comes across the centuries, as it sees the sand of its days running through its fingers together with all that it has constructed: love, ambition, work and life itself.

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[12] "Good and bad are not two cut-and-dried, separate existences . . . The very phenomenon which is appearing to be good now, may appear to be bad tomorrow . . . The fire that burns the child, may cook a good meal for a starving man . . . The only way to stop evil, therefore, is to stop good also . . . To stop death, we shall have to stop life also . . . each of (the two opposing terms) is but a different manifestation of the same thing . . . The Vedanta says, there must come a time when we shall look back and laugh at the ideals which make us afraid of giving up our individuality."
(Lecture on *Maya and Illusion*. *Complete Works,* II, pp. 97-8).

"This world's wheel within wheel is terrible mechanism; if we put our hands to it, as soon as we are caught, we are gone. . . . We are all being dragged along by this mighty, complex world machine." [14]

How then can we find the path to liberty?

For in the case of a Vivekananda or of any other man cast in the heroic mould there can be no question of throwing up the arms in advance, raising the hands and resigning himself to despair—still less is it possible to cover the eyes as do some agnostics, while they chant "What do I know?" and to gulp down the fleeting and passing pleasures which brush past our bodies like ghosts floating along the edge of the river! . . . What is it that will assuage the cry of the Soul, the Great Hunger? Certainly such rags of flesh will not fill up the gulf! All the Epicure's roses will not keep him from starting back like the horses of Orcagna in the Campo Santo,[15] from the stench of putrifying corpses. He must get out of the graveyard, out of the circle of tombs, away from the crematorium. He must win freedom or die! And better to die, if need arises, for freedom![16]

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[13] From the fourth Lecture on Maya.

[14] *Karma-yoga,* Chapter VIII.

"Better to die on the battlefield than to live a life of defeat!"

This trumpet call from ancient India[17] and sounded again by Vivekananda is the motto, according to him, the word of command written on the starting post of all religions, whence they set out on their age-long march. But it is also the motto of the great scientific spirit. "I will hew out a way for myself. I will know the truth, or give up my life in the attempt."[18] With both science and religion the original impulse is the same—and so too is the end to be achieved—Freedom. Is it not true that the learned man who believes in nature's laws seeks to discover them solely for the purpose of mastering them in order to use them in the service of the spirit that their knowledge has set free? And what have all the religions in the world been seeking? They project this same sovereign freedom, which is refused to every individual being, into a God, into a higher, greater, more powerful Being who is not bound —(in whatever form they may imagine Him)—and freedom is to be won by the mediation of the Conqueror: God, the Gods, the Absolute or the idol; all are the agents of power set up by humanity, in order to realise in its stead those gigantic aspirations, for which it can find no assuagement in a life that it knows is ever slipping away: for they are its bread of life, the reason for its very existence.

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[15] Allusion to the famous fresco of Orcagna in the Campo Santo of Pisa. (XVth century.)

[16] This brings out the error made by the psycho-pathologist in attributing to genuine Introversion a character of *flight,* misunderstanding its true character of *combat.* Great mystics, of the type of Ruysbroeck, Eckhart, Jean de la Croix and Vivekananda, do not flee. They look reality straight in the face, and then close in battle.

[17] Vivekananda attributed this saying to Buddha. The idea of a struggle for freedom is emphasised in pure Christian thought. Denis the Areopagite goes so far as to make Jesus Christ the chief fighter, and the "First athlete":

"It was Christ who as God instituted this struggle and this is yet more Divine . . . He devotedly entered the lists with them, contending on behalf of their freedom . . . The initiated will enter the contests, as those of God, rejoicing . . . following in the divine steps of the first of athletes . . ."
(*Concerning the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* Chapter II, Part III; *Contemplation,* 6.)

"And so all are marching towards freedom. We are all journeying towards freedom."[19]

And Vivekananda recalled the mysterious answer of the Upanishads to the question they propounded:

"The question is: 'What is this universe? From what does it arise? Into what does it go?' And the answer is, 'In freedom it rises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away.'"

You cannot give up this idea of freedom, so Vivekananda continued. Without it your being is lost. It is no question of science or religion, of unreason or reason, of good or evil, of hatred or love,—all beings without any exception hear the voice that calls them to freedom. And all follow it like the children who followed the Piper of Hamelin.[20] The ferocious struggle of the world arises from the fact that all are striving among themselves, as to who can follow the enchanter most closely and attain the promised end. But all these millions fight blindly without understanding the real meaning of the voice. Those to whom understanding is given realise in the same instant not only its meaning, but the harmony of the battlefield, whereon the plants, the brethren of the peoples, revolve, where all living beings, saints and sinners, good and bad (so called according to whether they stumble or walk erect—but all towards the same end), struggling or united press on towards the one goal: Freedom.[21]

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[18] Lecture on *Maya and Liberty.*
[19] *ibid.*

There can be then no question of opening up an unknown way for them. Rather distracted mankind must learn that there are a thousand paths more or less certain, more or less straight, but all going there—and must be helped to free themselves from the quagmire wherein they are walking, or from the thickets whereon they are being torn, and shown among all these multitudinous ways the most direct, the *Viae Romanae,* the royal roads: the great Yogas: Work (Karma-yoga), Love (Bhakti-yoga), Knowledge (Jnana-yoga.)

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[20] Allusion to the old Rhenish legend, told by Goethe, of the "Ratcatcher" whose flute captivated all who heard it and forced them to follow him. (The story is used by Browning in the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Translator.)

[21] And this *object,* as the Advaita shows, is the *subject* itself, the real nature and essence of each one. It is MYSELF.

II

THE GREAT PATHS
THE YOGAS

THE term yoga [1] has been compromised in the West by the many charlatans and the gull-catchers who have degraded its use. These spiritual methods, based on psycho-physiological genius experimenting for centuries past, assure to those who have assimilated them a spiritual mastery, which is inevitably and openly manifested in a mighty power for action—(a sane and complete soul is the lever of Archimedes: find its fulcrum and it will raise the world). Hence the interested pragmatism of thousands of dupes has rushed [2] to seize upon these real or faked methods with a gross spiritualism differing but little from a commercial transaction; with them faith is the medium of exchange whereby they may acquire the goods of this world: money, power, health, beauty, virility . . . (One has only to open the papers to see the claims of debased doctors and spurious fakirs). There is no Hindu of sincere faith who does not feel an equal disgust for such base exploitation; and not one of them has expressed it more forcibly than Vivekananda. In the eyes of all disinterested believers, it is the sign of a fallen soul to put to base uses the way which has been proved to be the way of liberation, and to turn the Appeal of the Eternal Soul and the way of its attainment into a means for the pursuit of the worst desires of the flesh, pride and lust for power.

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[1] Vivekananda derives the word from the same Sanskrit root as the English yoke, in the sense of *joining*. It implies *union* with God and the means to attain that union. (Cf. Vol V. of *Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda*. p. 219: *Notes from Lectures and Discourses*.)

[2] Here at first I had written (and I ask my American friends to pardon me for it; for among them I have met the freest minds and the purest characters): "Among such dupes, the Anglo-Saxons of America hold the first place." But I am not so sure in these days. In this as in many other things America merely went ahead of the Old World. But the latter is now in a fair way to catch her up, and when it comes to extravagances the oldest are not always the last.

The real Vedantic yogas, such as Vivekananda has described them in his treatises,[3] are a spiritual discipline, such as our Western philosophers have sought for in their "Discourse of Method,"[4] for the purpose of travelling along the straight way leading to truth. And this straight way, as in the West, is the way of experiment and reason.[5]

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[3] I am aware that the definition of it given by the greatest living master of yoga, Aurobindo Ghose, differs slightly from that of Vivekananda, although he quoted the later as his authority, in the first article he published on the *Synthesis of Yoga* (*Arya Review.* Pondicherry, August 15, 1914). Aurobindo does not confine himself only to the properly Vedic or Vedantic Yogas, which are always founded on Knowledge (of the spirit or the heart or the will). He adds Tantric Yogas after having cleansed and purified their polluted sources. This introduces the Dionysiac element as distinct from the Apollinian. Prakriti, Energy, the Soul of Nature—in opposition to Purusha, the conscious Soul, which observes, understands and controls. The very originality of Aurobindo Ghose is that he achieves the synthesis of the diverse forces of life. The European reader will perhaps be interested to find at the end of this volume several pages summing up the essence of Aurobindo's thought on this subject, taken from his own exposition of it.

[4] Allusion to the title of a famous treatise of Descartes, the foundation stone of modern Western philosophy.

[5] "No one of these Yogas gives up reason, no one of them asks

But the chief differences are that in the first place for the Eastern philosopher the spirit is not limited to the intelligence; and that in the second place, thought is action, and only action can make thought of any value. The Indian whom the average European always considers a blind believer in comparison to himself, carries in his faith demands as sceptical as those of St. Thomas the Apostle: he must touch; abstract proof is not enough; and he is right to tax the Westerner who contents himself with abstract proof as a visionary. . . . "If God exists it must be possible to reach him. . . . Religion is neither word nor doctrine. It is realisation. It is not hearing and accepting. It is being and becoming. It begins with the exercise of the faculty of religious realisation."[6]

You will have noticed in the preceding pages, that the search for "truth" is combined with the search for "freedom." The two terms are really identical: for the Westerner[7] there are two distinct worlds: speculation

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you to be hoodwinked or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever . . . Each one of them tells you to *cling* to your reason, to hold fast to it." *(Jnana-yoga. The Ideal of a Universal Religion.)*

[6] Cf. Vivekananda: *Study of Religion; My Master.* Many texts exist. This idea, a common one in India, is explained by Vivekananda in all its forms—especially in his great lecture on Hinduism at the Congress of Chicago, in September, 1893, and in a series of lectures in the Punjab in October, 1897. There one of his leit-motifs was "Religion, to be worthy the name, must be action." This explains the vast spiritual tolerance which makes the followers of Ramakrishna embrace all the diverse and even opposite forms of religion: for "religion being concentrated in realisation, and not in any doctrinal affirmation," it is natural that the same Verity changes when it is adapted to the different needs of the most diverse human natures.

[7] I always except the Catholic Christian Mysticism of the West, whose ancient and profound affinity to that of India I shall often have occasion to show throughout these pages. For a great Chris-

and action, pure reason and practical reason—(and we are well aware of the trench with its barbed wire fortifications that Germany, the most philosophic of European peoples, has dug between them); but for the Indian they are one and the same world: knowledge implies power and will to action. "Who knows, is." Hence "true knowledge is salvation."

But before true knowledge can be efficacious—otherwise there is always the danger that it might degenerate into a mere exercise of dialectics—it must be prepared to influence mankind in general, divided as it is into three great types: the Active, the Emotional, and the Reflective. True science has accordingly taken the three forms of work, Love and Knowledge—Karma, Bhakti and Jnana,[8] and the Propylaeum, the motive Force of all three is the science of inner forces, consciously controlled and mastered—the science of Raja-yoga.[9]

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tian perfect "adherence" to the supreme Truth procures true freedom. For true freedom "presupposes a certain condition of indifference, illimitation and independence with regard to outside things founded on perfect union with and adherence to God." (Cf. the Treatise of Seguenot, the disciple of Berulle, Cardinal and great French mystic theologian of the XVIIth century, *"Conduite d' Oraison,"* etc., anno 1634, analysed by Henri Brémond in *Metaphysique des Saints,* Vol. I, p. 138.)

[8] Before Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, Keshab Chundar Sen, who in many directions opened out new paths, had already adopted the system of adapting the ways of the soul to the different temperaments of his disciples About 1875 when he inaugurated his new spiritual culture, he recommended Yoga (that is to say, raja), to some, Bhakti to others, Jnana to a third set. And he attached different forms of devotion to diverse names or attributes of God—composing in the same way litanies to celebrate the different perfections of the unique Good. (Cf. P. C. Mazoomdar.)

[9] Of all forms of yoga the one most abused, exploited and monstrously deformed by degraded Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, which looks upon it as an end in itself, whereas it ought to be a wise ap-

Hindu belief as explained by Count Keyserling, who is in aristocratic agreement with it, is that Work (Karma-yoga) is "the lowest" [10] of the three ways. But I do not believe that there was a "high road" and a "low road" for the boundless heart of Ramakrishna. Everything that led to God was of God. And I am certain that to Vivekananda, the passionate brother of the humble and the poor, the way trodden by their naked feet was holy:

" 'Fools alone say that work and philosophy are different, not the learned'. . . . Each one of our yogas—the yogas of work, of wisdom, and of devotion are all capable of serving as direct and independent means for the attainment of Moksha." (Freedom, salvation.) [11]

And how admirably independent are these great religious minds of India, how far removed from the caste-pride of our learned men and believers in the West! Vivekananda, aristocrat, savant and prophet, does not hesitate to write:

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plied method of concentration to prepare for the mastery of the mind and to make the whole psycho-physiological organism a supple and docile instrument so that it may be able to advance further along one of the paths of Knowledge—in the sense of truth realised by the mind—or of real and complete Liberty. Need I remind my readers that great Christian mysticism has also its Raja-yoga, experimented and controlled by a series of masters in the past.

Aurobindo Ghose, when he revived Raja-yoga, defined it thus: "All Raja-yoga depends on this perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces, can be separated or dissolved, can be newly combined, and set to novel and formerly impossible uses or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes." *(op. cit.)*

[10] Naturally "the highest" is the philosophical. (Cf. pp. 284-5 of Vol. I., of the English Translation of *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher,* Jonathan Cape, 1925.) But Aurobindo Ghose makes Bhakti-yoga the highest. *(Essays on the Gita.)*

[11] *Karma-Yoga* Chapter VI.

"Although a man has not attained a single system of philosophy, although he does not believe in any God and never has believed, although he has not prayed even once in his whole life, if the simple power of good actions has brought him to the state where he is ready to give up his life and all else for others, he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through his knowledge"—to know *Nivritti,* entire self-abnegation.[12] Here Indian wisdom and the pure Gospel of Galilee [13] without the slightest effort find common ground in the kinship existing between all great souls.

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[12] ibid.

[13] Let us put down here the connection between the two systems of religious thought. William James, who has studied *"Religious Experiences"* with praiseworthy zeal, but—he confesses it himself—without any personal fitness for the task ("My temperament," he writes, "prohibits me from almost all mystic experience, and I can only give the evidence of others") is apt to attribute to Western mysticism a character of "sporadic" exception which he opposes to the "methodically cultivated mysticism" of the East; and as a result he considers that the former is alien to the daily life of the average man and woman in the West. In fact, like most Protestants he knows little of the daily "methodical mysticism" of Western Catholicism. The union with God that Indians seek through the Yogas, is a natural state with the true Christian, imbued with the essence of his faith. It is perhaps even more innate and spontaneous; for, according to the Christian faith "the centre of the soul is God," "the Son of God" is woven into the very texture of Christian thought and he has therefore only to offer this thought to God in prayer to "adhere" to Christ and find communion with God.

The difference, (I prefer to believe) is that God in the West plays a more active part than in India, where the human soul has to make all the effort. By "common and ordinary grace" the "mystic career" is open to all, as Brémond rightly shows, and the chief business of Christian mysticism throughout the ages has been to open this door of mystic union with God to the rest of the world. Seen from this standpoint the XVIIth century in France was astonishingly democratic. (I refer the reader again to the

I—*Karma-Yoga*

Of the four gospels of Vivekananda—his four Yogas —I find the most deep and moving tone in the Gospel of Work—Karma-yoga.

Here follow several extracts coupled to the dark saying I have already quoted about the blind Wheel of the Universe, whereon mankind is bound and broken.

". . . This world's wheel within wheel is terrible mechanism; if we put our hands in it as soon as we are caught we are gone. . . . We are all being dragged along by this mighty complex world-machine. There are only two ways out of it; one is to give up all concern with the machine, to let it go and stand aside. . . . That is very easy to say, but it is almost impossible to do. I do not know whether in twenty millions of men one can do that. . . .

"*Metaphysique des Saints*" by H. Brémond, and in particular to two curious portraits: one of the Franciscan "pan-mystic," Paul de Lagny, and the other of the "Vigneron de Montmorency" (the winegrower of Montmorency), Jean Aumont, whose robust Gallic common sense revolted against the idea that "mysticism" was not for everybody. Our Lord refused it to none except the man who was too lazy to have the courage to stoop down and drink. The great Salesien (disciple of the great XVIIth century mystic, St. Francis de Sales Bishop of Annecy in Savoy.) Jean Pierre Camus, achieved the difficult task of watering down the potent mystic liquor of Denys the Areopagite, into an innocuous table wine of slightly diluted truth for all good people. This democratisation of mysticism is a striking phenomenon of our Classic Age, as the French call the intellectual XVIIth century. Not for the first time does it appear that great transformations in the soul of humanity always come forth from the depths. Religion and metaphysics precede literary and political thought by one or several centuries. But the latter, being ignorant of spiritual things, flatter themselves that they are the inventors or discoverers of truths that have formed part of the substructure of the mind for a long time before their advent.

"If we give up our attachment to this little universe of the senses, we shall be free immediately. The only way to come out of bondage is to go beyond the limitations of law, to go beyond causation. But it is a most difficult thing to give up the clinging to the universe; few ever attain to that. . . .

"The other way is not negative but positive. . . . It is to plunge into the world and learn the secret of work. . . . Do not fly away from the wheels of the world machine but stand inside it and learn the secret of work, and that is the way of Karma-Yoga. . . . Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. . . .

"Every one must work in the universe. . . . A current rushing down of its own nature falls into a hollow and makes a whirlpool, and after running a little in that whirlpool, it emerges again in the form of the free current to go on unchecked. Each human life is like that current. It gets into the whirl, gets involved in the world of space, time and causation, whirls round a little, crying out, 'my father, my brother, my name, my fame' and so on, and at last emerges out of it and regains its original freedom. The whole universe is doing that. Whether we know it or not . . . we are all working to get out of the dream of the world. Man's experience in the world is to enable him to get out of its whirlpool. . . .

"We see that the whole universe is working. For what? . . . For liberty; from the atom to the highest being working for the one end, liberty for the mind, for the body, for the spirit. All things are always trying to get freedom, flying away from bondage. The sun, the moon, the earth, the planets, all are trying to fly away from bondage. The centrifugal and centripetal forces of nature are indeed typical of our universe . . . . We learn from Karma-yoga the secret of work, the organising power of work. . . . Work is inevitable . . . . but we should work to the highest purpose. . . ."

And what is this highest purpose? Does it lie in moral or social Duty? Is it the passion for work which consumed the insatiable Faust so that with failing eyesight he strove up to the very threshold of the tomb to remodel the universe according to his own way of thinking (as if that would have been for the general good)? [14]

No! Vivekananda would have replied almost in the words of Mephistopheles, as he saw Faust fall:

"He persists in chasing with his love nothing but phantoms. Up to the last miserable, empty instant, the unfortunate man has kept it up! . . ." [15]

"Karma-yoga says: 'Work incessantly, but give up all attachment to work'. . . . Hold your mind free.[16]

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[14] And even he, Faust, in those last seconds of life, evoked the phantom of Liberty, pursued unceasingly.

"He alone is worthy of liberty, who knows how to conquer it each day. . . ."

[15] In re-reading this scene from Goethe, it is striking to find in it thought and expression often closely akin to the Hindu Maya: (Mephistopheles, looking at the corpse of Faust):

"Gone! What a stupid word! . . . He is worth exactly as much as if he had never existed; and nevertheless man strives and moves as if he did exist . . . In his place I should prefer eternal annihilation."

[16] This is the classic doctrine of the Gita: "The ignorant work by attachment to the act; the wise man also works but beyond all attachment and solely for the good of the world . . . Referring all action to me, let the spirit, withdrawn into itself and free from all hope and interested motives, strive without troubling itself with scruples . . ."

Cf. Christian mysticism: "Do not strive . . . either for some useful end, or temporal profit, or for hell, or for Paradise, or for Grace, or to become the beloved of God . . . but purely and simply to the glory of God." *(Conduite d'Oraison,* by the Bérullian, Claude Seguenot, 1634).

Do not project into it the tentacle of selfishness: . . . 'I and mine'."

There must even be freedom from all belief in Duty! . . . He keeps his greatest irony for Duty, the last shabby and tiresome fetich of the small shopkeeper.

"Karma-yoga teaches us that the ordinary idea of duty is on the lower plane; nevertheless, all of us have to do our duty.[17] Yet we may see that this peculiar sense of duty is very often a cause of great misery. Duty becomes a disease with us. . . It is the bane of human life. . . . Look at those poor slaves to duty! Duty leaves them no time to say prayers, no time to bathe. Duty is ever on them. They go out and work. Duty is on them! They come home and think of work for the next day. Duty is on them! It is living a slave's life, at last dropping down in the street and dying in harness like a horse. This is duty as it is understood. . . . The only true duty is to be unattached and to work as free beings, to give up all work unto God. All our duties are His. Blessed are we that we are ordered out here. We serve our time; whether

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But with more courage still, Vivekananda expressly stipulates that such renunciation is not conditional upon faith in any God whatsoever. Faith merely makes it easier. He appeals first to "those who do not believe in God or in any outside help. They are left to their own devices; they have simply to work with their own will, with the powers of the mind and with discrimination, saying, 'I must be non-attached.' "

[17] Vivekananda devotes a whole chapter to the definition of real duty. But he refuses to give it an objective reality: "It is not the thing done that defines a duty . . . Yet duty exists from the subjective side. Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action . . .; any action that makes us go downward is evil . . . There is, however, only one idea of duty which has been universally accepted by all mankind, of all ages and sects and countries, and that has been summed up in a Sanskrit aphorism, thus: 'Do not injure any being; not injuring any being is virtue; injuring any being is sin.' " (*Karma-yoga,* chap. IV).

we do it ill or well, who knows? If we do it well we do not get the fruits.[18] If we do it ill, neither do we get the care. Be at rest, be free and work. . . .

This kind of freedom is a very hard thing to attain. How easy it is to interpret slavery as duty, the morbid attachment of flesh for flesh as duty! Men go out into the world and struggle and fight for money (or ambition). Ask them why they do it. They say, 'It is a duty.' It is the absurd greed for gold and gain, and they try to cover it with a few flowers. . . . When an attachment has become established (marriage for example) we call it duty. . . . It is, so to say, a sort of chronic disease. When it is acute we call it disease, when it is chronic we call it nature. . . . We baptise it with the high-sounding name of duty. We strew flowers upon it, trumpets sound for it, sacred texts are said over it, and then the whole world fights, and men earnestly rob each other for this duty's sake. . . . To the lowest kinds of men, who cannot have any other ideal, it is of some good; but those who want to be Karma-Yogis must throw this idea of duty overboard. There is no duty for you and me. Whatever you have to give to the world, do give by all means, but not as a duty. Do not take any thought of that. Be not compelled. Why should you be compelled? *Everything that you do under compulsion goes to build up attachment.* Why should you have any duty? Resign everything unto God.[19] In this tremendous fiery furnace where the fire of duty scorches everything, drink this cup of nectar and be happy. We are all simply working out His will, and have nothing to do with rewards and punishments.[20] If you want the reward you must also have the punishment; the only way to get out of the punishment is to give up the reward. The only way of getting out of misery is by giving up the idea of happiness, because these two are linked to each other. The only way to get beyond death is to give up the love of life. Life and death are the same thing, looked at from different points. So the idea of happiness without misery or of life without death is very good for school boys or children; but the thinker sees that it is all a contradiction in terms and gives up both."

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[18] "We have the right to the work, not to the fruits thereof," says the Gita.

[19] "Men who aspire to nothing, neither honours nor usefulness, nor inner sacrifice, nor holiness, nor reward, nor to the kingdom of heaven, but who have renounced all these things and all that is their own—God is honoured by such men." (Meister Eckhart.)

To what a pitch of human detachment does this intoxication with boundless Liberty lead! Moreover, it is obvious that such an ideal is not only beyond most men, but that, if badly interpreted, by its very excess it may lead to indifference to one's neighbour as well as to oneself and hence to the end of all social action. Death may lose its sting, but so also does life, and then what remains as a stimulus to that doctrine of service which is so essential a part of Vivekananda's teaching and personality?

But it is always important to notice *to whom* Vivekananda was addressing each of his lectures or writings. Because his religion was essentially realistic and practical with action as its object, its expression varied with his public. So vast and complex a system of thought could not be swallowed whole at one gulp. It was necessary to chose between different points of view. In this case Vivekananda was addressing Americans, and there was no danger that they would sin by excess of self-forgetfulness and action; the Swami therefore emphasized that opposite extreme, the virtues of other lands beyond the sea.

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[20] ". . . He only is fit to contemplate the Divine light who is the slave to nothing, not even to his virtues." (Ruysbroeck, *De Ornatu spiritalium nuptiarum.)*

"Every man who counts anything as merit, virtue, or wisdom except only humility, is an idiot."

(id. De praecipuis quibusdam virtutibus!)

On the other hand when he spoke to his Indians, he was the first to denounce the inhuman extravagance to which a religion of detachment might lead. Directly after his return from America in 1897, when an old Bengal professor, one of Ramakrishna's pupils, raised the objection, "All that you say about charity, service and the good that is to be accomplished in the world, belongs after all to the realm of Maya. Does not the Vedanta teach us that our object is to break all our chains? Why then should we make unto ourselves others?" Vivekananda replied with this sarcasm:

"At that rate does not even the idea of liberation (Mukhti) belong to the realm of Maya? Does not the Vedanta teach us that the Atman is always free? Why then struggle for liberation?"

And later alone with his disciples he said bitterly that such interpretation of the Vedanta had done incalculable harm to the country.[21]

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[21] There were many similar episodes. One was his turbulent interview with a devotee who refused to think about a terrible famine to which Central India was a prey (900,000 dead). The devotee maintained it was a matter concerning only the victim's Karma and was none of his business. Vivekananda went scarlet with anger. The blood rose to his face, his eyes flashed and he thundered against the hard heart of the Pharisee. Turning to his disciples, he exclaimed "This, this is how our country is being ruined! To what extremes has this doctrine of Karma fallen! Are they men, those who have no pity for men?"

His whole body was shaken with anger and disgust.

Another memorable scene related above will be remembered, when Vivekananda loftily castigated his own disciples and fellow

He knew only too well that there is no form of detachment where selfishness cannot find means to enter in and that there is no more repulsive form of it than the conscious or unconscious hypocrisy involved in a "liberation" sought only for self and not for others. He never ceased to repeat to his Sannyasins that they had taken two vows, and that although the first was "to realise truth," the second was "to help the world." His own mission and that of his followers was to rescue the great teachings of the Vedanta from their selfish retreat among a few privileged persons and to spread them among all sorts and conditions of men as they were fitted to assimilate them.[22] During his last days, when his body was ravaged by disease and his soul had won the right of being three parts detached from all human preoccupations—for he had finished his work at the sacrifice of his whole life—at the very hour when he was being asked about questions of the day, and replied that "his spirit could not go into them, for it was too far gone in death,"—he still made one exception, "his work, his lifework."[23]

Every human epoch has been set its own particular work. Our task is, or ought to be, to raise the masses, so long shamefully betrayed, exploited, and degraded

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monks, spurning underfoot their preoccupation with and their doctrine of individual holiness, and mocked even their authority, Ramakrishna. For he reminded them that there was no law or religion higher than the command to "Serve Mankind."

[22] "Knowledge of the Advaita has been hidden too long in caves and forests. It has been given to me to rescue it from its seclusion and to carry it into the midst of family and social life . . . The drum of the Advaita shall be sounded in all places in the bazaars, from the hilltops and on the plains."

[23] The Sunday before his death: "You know the work is always my weak point! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!"

by the very men who should have been their guides and sustainers. Even the hero or the saint, who has reached the threshold of final liberation, must retrace his steps to help his brethren who have fallen by the way or who are lagging behind. The greatest man is he who is willing to renounce his own realisation—Karma-yoga—in order to help others to realise it instead.[24]

So then there was no danger that the Master of Karma-Yoga would ever sacrifice his flock to his own ideal, however sublime, but inhuman for the majority of mankind, being beyond their nature. And no other religious doctrine has ever shown so much sympathetic understanding of the spiritual needs of all men from the humblest to the highest. It regarded all fanaticism and intolerance as a source of slavery and spiritual death.[25] The only possible line of conduct for the achievement of liberation was for each man to know his own ideal and to seek to accomplish it; or, if he were incapable of discovering it alone it was for a master to help him, but never to substitute his own. Always and everywhere the constantly repeated principle of true Karma-yoga is "to work freely," "to work for freedom," "to work as a master and not as a slave."[26] That is why it can never be a question of working at the command of a master. His word can only be effectual if the master forgets himself in him whom he is counselling, if he espouses his nature and helps it to discern and accomplish its own destiny by the powers innate in every man.

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[24] "Help men to stand upright, by themselves, and to accomplish their Karma-yoga for themselves." (Vivekananda to his monks, 1897.)

[25] "One must first know how to work without attachment, then he will not be a fanatic . . . If there were no fanaticism in the world it would make much more progress than it does now . . . It is a retarding element . . . When you have avoided fanaticism then alone will you work well . . . You hear fanatics glibly saying, 'I do not hate the sinner, I hate the sin;' but I am prepared to go any distance to see the face of that man who can really make a distinction between the sin and the sinner. . . ."
(*Karma-yoga,* chapter V.)

Such is the real duty of all great organisers of human Work, like Vivekananda. He comprehended the entire hierarchy of Karma-yogas, where as in a vast workshop different types and forms of associated labour work, each in its own place, at the one great task.

But these words, "workshop," "types" and "ranks" do not imply any idea of superiority or inferiority among the different kinds of workmen. These are vain prejudices that the great aristocrat repudiated. He would allow no castes among the workers, but only differences between the tasks alloted to them.[27] The most showy and apparently important do not constitute a real title to greatness. And if Vivekananda can be said to have had any preference it was for the humblest and simplest:

"If you really want to judge of the character of a man look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is really the great man whose character is great always, the same wherever he be."[28]

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[26] "The whole gist of this teaching is that you should work like a *master* and not as a *slave* . . . Work through freedom . . . When we ourselves work for the things of this world as slaves . . . our work is not true work . . . Selfish work is slave's work . . . Work without attachment."

(*ibid,* chap. III.)

[27] The important thing is to recognise that there are gradations of Karma-yogas. The duty of one condition of life in an accumulation of given circumstances is not and cannot be the same as in another . . . Each man must learn his own ideal and try to accomplish it . . . that is a surer way of progress than to take the ideas of another, for they can never be realised.

In speaking of classes among workers, it is small matter for wonder that Vivekananda places first, not the illustrious, those crowned with the halo of glory and veneration—no, not even the Christs and the Buddhas. But rather the nameless, the silent ones—the "unknown soldiers."

The page is a striking one, not easily forgotten when read:

"The greatest men in the world have passed away unknown. The Buddhas and the Christs that we know are but second rate heroes in comparison with the greatest men of whom the world knows nothing. Hundreds of these unknown heroes have lived in every country working silently. Silently they live and silently they pass away; and in time their thoughts find expression in Buddhas or Christs, and it is these latter that become known to us. The highest men do not seek to get any name or fame from their knowledge. They leave their ideas to the world; they put forth no claims for themselves and establish no schools or systems in their name. Their whole nature shrinks from such a thing. They are the pure *Sattvikas,* who can never make any stir, but only melt down in love.[29] . . . In the life of Gautama Buddha we notice him constantly saying that he is

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[28] *ibid.* chapter I.

[29] Vivekananda added an example from his own personal observation:

"I have seen one such *Yogi,* who lives in a cave in India . . . He has so completely lost the sense of his own individuality that the twenty-fifth Buddha. The twenty-four before him are unknown to history although the Buddha known to history must have been built upon foundations laid by them. The highest men are calm, silent and unknown. they are the men who really know the power of thought; they are sure that even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live throughout eternity. Indeed such thoughts will penetrate through the mountains, cross the oceans and travel through the world. They will enter deep into human hearts and brains and raise up men and women who will give them practical expression in the workings of human life. . . . The Buddhas and the Christs will go from place to place preaching these truths. . . . These *Sattvika* men are too near the Lord to be active and to fight, to be working, struggling, preaching and doing good, as they say, here on earth to humanity. . . ."[30]

Vivekananda did not claim a place among them but relegated himself to the second, or the third rank, among those who work without any interested motive.[31]

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we may say that the man in him is completely gone, leaving behind only the all-comprehending sense of the divine . . ."

He was speaking of Pavhari Baba of Gazipur, who had fascinated him at the beginning of his pilgrimage in India in 1889-90, and whose influence only just failed to drag him back from the mission Ramakrishna had traced for him. Pavhari Baba maintained that all work in the ordinary sense was bondage; and he was certain that nothing but the spirit without the action of the body could help other men.

[30] *Karma-yoga,* chapter VII.

[31] "He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of *Karma-Yoga.*" (*ibid.* End of Chapter VIII.)

For those *Sattvikas* who have passed the stage of Karma-koga have already reached the other side, and Vivekananda remains on ours.

His ideal of the active omnipotence that radiates from intense and withdrawn mystic thought, is certainly not one to astonish the religious soul of the West; all our great contemplative orders have known it. And our highest form of modern lay thought can recognise itself in it as well; for wherein lies the differences from the homage we render in a democratic form from the bottom of our hearts to the thousands of silent workers, whose humble life of toil and meditation is the reserve of heroism and the genius of the nations?[32] He who wrote these lines and who can, in default of any other merit, attest to sixty years unceasing work, is a living witness to these generations of silent workers, of whom he is at once the product and the voice. Toiling along, and bending over himself, striving to hear the inner voice, he has heard the voices of those nameless ones rising, like the sound of the sea whence clouds and rivers are born—the dumb thousand whose unexpressed knowledge is the substance of my thought and the mainspring of my will. When outside noises cease I can hear the beating of their pulse in the night.

[32] The Hindu genius has the same intuition, but explains it by the doctrine of Reincarnation, of a long series of works collected during a succession of lives: "The men of mighty will have all been tremendous workers . . . with wide wills . . . they got by persistent work, through ages and ages." The Buddhas and the Christs have been possible, thanks only to their accumulation of power, which comes from the work of centuries. (Karma-Yoga.)

However chimercial this theory of Reincarnation may appear to a Westerner, it establishes the closest relationship between the men of all ages, and is akin to our modern faith in universal brotherhood.

II—Bhakti-Yoga

The second path leading to Truth—to Freedom—is the way of the heart: Bhakti-Yoga. .Here again I seem to hear the parrot cry of our learned ones. "There is no truth except through reason; and the heart does not and cannot lead to anything but slavery and confusion." Let me beg of them to remain in their own path, where I will return to them anon; it is the only one that suits them and so they do well to stick to it; but is is not well to claim that all minds can be contained in it. They underestimate not only the rich diversity of the human mind, but the essentially *living* character of truth. They are not wrong to denounce the dangers of servitude and error lurking in the way of the heart; but they make a mistake when they think that the same dangers are absent from the path of intellectual knowledge. To the great "Discriminator" (Viveka) by whatever path a man travels, the spirit ascends by a series of partial errors and partial truths, ridding itself one after the other of the vestments of slavery until he reaches the whole and pure light of Liberty and Truth, called by the Vedantist *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Absolute Existence, Knowledge, Bliss): it enfolds within its empire the two distinct realms of heart and reason.

But for the benefit of Western intellectuals it should be clearly stated that not one of them is more on his guard against ambushes on the road of the heart than Vivekananda; for he knew them better than any. Although Bhakti-Yoga under different names has seen the feet of the great mystic pilgrims of the West passing by, and thousands of humble believers following in their footsteps, the spirit of law and order bequeathed by ancient Rome to our Churches as well as to our States, has effectively kept the crusaders of Love in the right path, without permitting dangerous excursions outside its limits. In passing, it is worthy of note that this fact explains Count von Keyserling's specious judgment upon Bhakti as compared to Europe.[33] The mobile and brilliant genius of the "Wandering Philosopher", with its lack of tenderness that leads him to depreciate what he is pleased to call "superannuated feminine ideals,"[34] because they are beyond the limits of his nature, had made him exaggerate the lack of heart in the West, of which he claims to be the most perfect representative.[35] In reality he has a very superficial knowledge of the Catholic Bhakti of Europe. His judgment seems to be based on the wild mystics of the XIVth century in Flanders and Germany, such as the violent Meister Eckhart and Ruysbroeck, but can he equally distrust the delicate treasures of sensitive love and religious emotion in France and the Latin countries? To tax the Western mystic with "poverty," with "paltriness", with a lack of nicety and refinement [36] is to cast aspersions at the same time upon the perfection attained in France by a whole galaxy of religious thinkers during the XVIIth century—the equals if not the superiors of the psychological masters of the French Classical Age—and of their successors, the modern novelists in analysing the most secret feelings of mankind.[37]

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[33] *The Travel of a Philosopher,* English translation, Vol. I., p. 225 *et seq.*

[34] *ibid.* pp. 144-5.

[35] Yesterday as today the word of Rabindranath Tagore is true: "Of all the Westerners that I know, Keyserling is the most violently Western," quoted complaisantly by himself in the Preface to his "Journey."

Moreover having generalised the whole West from his own temperament, he raises what is lacking in himself into a virtue, nay more, into the "mission" of the West. *(ibid.* p. 195 *et seq.)*

[36] "The heart, no matter what they say, is only poorly developed in the Westerner. We imagine, because we have prospered for one and a half thousand years a religion of love that for this reason love animates us. That is not true . . . How meagre is the effect of Thomas â Kempis by the side of Ramakrishna! How poor is the highest European Bhakti beside that, for instance, of

With regard to the ardour of this faith of love, I refuse to believe that in the case of a great European believer it can be inferior in quality to that of a great Asiatic believer. The excessive desire shown always by the latter for "Realisation" in my opinion is not the mark of the highest and purest religious soul. It is hardly possible that India could have invented *"Noli me tangere!"* in order to believe she must see, touch and taste. And she would be perilously near to unbelief if she had not at least the hope that one day she would attain her goal in this life. Vivekananda himself gave utterance to some words almost disconcerting and brutal in their frankness.[38] Their hunger for God is all-powerful; but there is a lofty and aristocratic bashfulness of love exemplified by one of our saints, who, when shown a miracle turned away his eyes and said:

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the Persian mystics. Western feeling is sharper than that of the East in so far as it possesses more kinetic energy, but it is not really so rich, so delicate, or so differentiated." *(ibid.* p. 225 *et seq.)*

[37] Cf. the books devoted to *"The Mystic Invasion in France,"* and to *"Mystic Conquest,"* in the admirable *Historie littéraire du sentiment religieux en France, depuis le fin des guerres de religion jusqu' à nos jours,* by Henri Brémond.

[38] "Only the man who has actually perceived God and soul has religion . . . We are all atheists; let us confess it. Mere intellectual assent does not make us religious. . . . All knowledge must stand on perception of certain facts . . . Religion is a question of fact."

(*Jnana-Yoga:* "Realisation.")

"Let me have the sweetness of believing without having seen."

We like to give credit to our ideals and we do not ask them to pay in advance. There are some most noble souls, whom I know, who give until they are bankrupt without thought of return.[39]

But let us not establish degrees; for there is more than one way of loving! If a man gives all that he has, it does not matter if his gift differs from that of his neighbour. They are equal.

Nevertheless we must recognise that by exercising a strict control over mysticism, our Western churches have curbed its emotional expression so that it is less obvious than in India, where it flows with no limitation. A great Hindu with the wisdom of Vivekananda, the responsible leader of his people's conscience, knew that he had little necessity to stimulate among his own people such dispositions of heart. On the other hand care was needed to keep them within bounds. They had too great a tendency to degenerate into morbid sentimentality. On many occasions I have already shown that Vivekananda reacted violently against anything of the kind. The scene with his monks is a memorable one, when he insulted their "sentimental imbecility" and was implacable in his condemnation of Bhakti—and then suddenly confessed that he himself was a prey to it. It was for that very reason that he took up arms against it, and was ever watchful to guard his spiritual flock against the abuses of the heart. His particular duty as a guide along the path of Bhakti-Yoga was to throw light on the windings of the road and the snares of sentiment.

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[39] One of the most touching charactertistics of our Western mysticism is the intelligent pity of souls, truly religious themselves, that has driven them to understand, to accept and even to love absence of God, so-called "hardness" of heart in others. It has been often described perhaps most strikingly in the celebrated pages of St. Jean-de-la-Croix, in *"La Nuit Obscure"* and of François de Sales, in the IXth book of his *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* (On the Purity of "Indifference"). It is difficult to know which to admire most, whether their acuteness of analysis, or the tender brotherly understanding hovering over the sufferings of the loving and devoted soul, and teaching it—(as in the beautiful story of the deaf musician who played the lute for his prince's pleasure and did not stop singing even when the prince, in order to try him, left the room)—to find joy in its pain and to offer to God its very forlornness as a proof of its supreme love:

"While, O God, I see Your sweet face, and know that the song of my love pleases You, alas, what comfort I find! . . . But when You turn away Your eyes, and I no longer see in Your sweet favour that You were taking pleasure in my song, O true God, how my soul suffers! But I do not stop loving You . . . or singing the hymn of my love, not for the pleasure I find in it, for I have none, but for the pure love of Your pleasure." (François de Sales.)

We shall see further on, that India also has its lovers of God, who give all without expecting any reward; for "they have passed the stage of recompense and sorrow." The human heart is the same everywhere.

The Religion of Love[40] covers an immense territory. Its complete exploration would entail a kind of *"Itineraire à Jerusalem,"*[41] being the march of the soul through the different stages of love towards the Supreme Love. It is a long and dangerous journey, and few arrive at the goal.

. . . "There is a power behind impelling us forward, we do not know where, to seek for the real object, but this love is sending us forward in search of it. Again and again we find out our mistake. We grasp something and find it slips through our fingers and then we grip something else. Thus on and on we go, till at last comes light; we come to God, the only One Who loves. His love knows no change. . . .[42] All the others are mere stages. . . . But the path to God is long and difficult. . . ."

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[40] *Religion of Love*—was the usual title given to a series of lectures given in England and the United States. Vivekananda there condensed in a universal form his teachings on Bhakti-Yoga. (A pamphlet of 124 pages, Udbodhan Office, Calcutta, 1922.)

[41] Allusion to the title of Chateaubriand's famous work.

And the majority lose themselves on the way. Turning towards his Indians Vivekananda said to them:—(let the humanitarians and Christians of the West mark his words!)

. . . "Millions of people make a trade of that religion of love. A few men in a century attain to that love of God and the whole country becomes blessed and hallowed. . . . When at last the Sun comes, all the lesser lights vanish. . . ."

"But," he hastened to add, "You have all to pass through these smaller loves. . . ."

But do not stop at these intermediary stages, and before all things be sincere! Never walk in a vain and hyprocritical pride that makes you believe you love God, when in reality you are attached to this world. And on the other hand—(and this is still more essential)—do not scorn other honest travellers who find it difficult to advance! Your first duty is to understand and to love those whose views are not the same as your own.

"Not only that we would not tell others that they are wrong, but that we would tell them that they are right, all of these who follow their own ways, that way which your nature makes it absolutely necessary for you to take is the right way. . . .[43] It is useless to quarrel with people who think differently from you. . . . There may be millions of radii converging towards the same centre in the sun. The further they are from the centre the greater is the distance between any two. But as they all meet at the centre all difference vanishes. The only solution is to march ahead and go towards the centre. . . ."

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[42] "'Wherever there is any love it is He, the Lord is present there! Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss—where friends clasp hands, He, the Lord, is present . . . in the sacrifice of a great man (who) loves and wishes to help mankind'."

"The ideal of man is to see God in everything. But if you cannot see Him in everything, see Him in one thing, in that thing which you like best, and then see Him in another. So on you go. There is infinite life before the soul. Take your time and you will achieve your end." *(God in Everything.)*

It follows that Vivekananda vigorously took up the cudgels against all dogmatic education, and nobody has more strenuously defended the freedom of the child. His soul, like his limbs, should be free from all bonds. To stifle the soul of a child is the worst crime of all, and yet we commit it daily.

". . . I can never teach you anything; you will have to teach yourself, but I can help you perhaps in giving expression to that thought. . . . I must teach myself religion. What right had my father to put all sorts of nonsense into my head? . . . or my master? . . . You say they are good, but they may not be *my* way. Think of the appalling evil that is in the world today, of the millions and millions of innocent children perverted by the wrong ways of teaching. How many beautiful spiritual truths have been nipped in the bud by this horrible idea of a family religion, a social religion, a national religion, and so forth. Think of what a mass of superstition is in your heads just now about your childhood's religion, or your country's religion, and what an amount of evil it does or can do. . . ."

Then must one simply fold one's arms? Why did

[43] What the Hindu calls the "ishtam" of each man.

Vivekananda busy himself with education with so much ardour and what happens to the teacher? He then becomes a liberator, who allows each one to work according to his capacities in his own way, at the same time instilling into each a proper respect for the way of his neighbours:

"There are so many ideals; I have no right to say what shall be your ideal, to force my ideals on you. My duty should be to lay before you all the ideals I know of and enable you to see by your own constitution what you like best, and which is most fitted to you. Take up that one which suits you best and persevere in it. This is your *Ishtam*. . . ."

That is why Vivekananda was the enemy of all so-called "established" religion, (of what he calls "congregational" religion,)—the religion of a Church.

"Let the Churches preach doctrines, theories, philosophies, to their heart's content." All these are unimportant. But no Church has the right to interfere with *real* religion, with "higher religion," with the religion of action called prayer, with "adoration," the real contact of the soul with God. These things are matters between the soul and God. "When it comes to worship, the real practical part of religion, it should be as Jesus says, 'When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.' " Deep religion "cannot be made public. . . . I cannot get ready my religious feelings at a moment's notice. What is the result of this mummery and mockery? It is making a joke of religion, the worst of blasphemy. . . . How can human beings stand this religious drilling? It is like soldiers in a barrack. Shoulder arms, kneel down, take a book, all regulated exactly. Five minutes of feeling, five minutes of reason, five minutes of prayer all arranged beforehand. These mummeries have driven out religion, and if they continue for centuries religion will cease to exist."

Religion consists solely of an inner life, and this inner life is a forest peopled by very diverse fauna, so that it is impossible to choose between the kings of the jungle.

"There is such a thing as instinct in us, which we have in common with the animals. . . . There is again a higher form of guidance, which we call reason, when the intellect obtains facts and then generalises them. There is the still higher form . . . which we call inspiration, which does not reason, but knows things by flashes. But how shall we know it from instinct? That is the great difficulty. Everyone comes to you, nowadays, and says he is inspired, and puts forth superhuman claims. How are we to distinguish between inspiration and deception?"

The answer is a striking one for the Western reader; for it is the same that a Western rationalist would give.

"In the first place, inspiration must not contradict reason. The old man does not contradict the child, he is the development of the child. What we call inspiration is the development of reason. The way to intuition is through reason. . . . No genuine inspiration ever contradicts reason. Where it does it is no inspiration."

The second condition is no less prudent and sane:

"Secondly, inspiration must be for the good of one and all; and not for name or fame or personal gain. It should always be for the good of the world, and perfectly unselfish."

It is only after subjecting inspiration to these two tests that it may be accepted. "But you must remember that there is not one in a million that is inspired, in the present state of the world."

Vivekananda cannot be accused of allowing too wide loopholes to credulity; for he knew his people and the abuse they made of it. He knew, moreover, that sentimental devotion is too often a mask for weakness of character, and he had no pity for such weakness.

"Be strong and stand up and seek the God of Love. This is the highest strength. What power is higher than the power of purity? . . . This love of God cannot be reached by the weak; therefore be not weak, either physically, mentally, morally or spiritually."[44]

Strength, virile reason, constant preoccupation with universal good, and complete disinterestedness, are the conditions for reaching the goal. And there is still another: it is the will to arrive. Most men who call themselves religious are not really so at bottom; they are too lazy, too fearful, too insincere; they prefer to linger on the way, and not to look too closely at what is awaiting them, hence they stagnate in the lotus land of formal devotion. "Temples or churches, books or forms are just for the child's play, so as to make the spiritual man strong enough to take yet higher steps, and these first steps are necessary to be taken if he wants religion."

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[44] Cf. the "heroic" character imprinted on divine Love by the great Christian mystics,—*"the Combat"* by Ruysbroeck, where the spirit and God grapple and strive savagely. (*De ornatu spiritalium nuptiarum,* II, 56, 57), the *"irascibilis"* soul of Meister Eckhart, seizing God by force. According to Eckhart, of the three highest forces of the soul, the first is Knowledge *(Erkenntnis),* the second, "irascibilis", the "violent aspiration towards the Most High" *(die sufstrebende Kraft);* the third, will power *(der Wille).* One of the symbols of this mystic encounter with God is Jacob wrestling with the angel. (Cf. the beautiful paraphrase made by the French Dominican of the XVIIth century, Chardon, p. 75-77 of Vol. I of Brémond's *Metaphysique des Saints*). Even the gentle François de Sales says:

"Love is the standard of the army of the virtues, they must all rally to her." *(Traité de l'Amour de Dieu).*

Here there is nothing effeminate. The virile soul flings itself into the thick of the fight courting wounds and death.

It is useless to urge that such stagnation is a sign of wise prudence, and that those who stand still would be in danger of losing their faith and their God, if they came out of their sheltering "kindergarten." The truth is that they have nothing to lose, being in reality only false devotees; true believers are preferable; for they are nearer to God. Here is the tribute paid by the greatest believer to sincere and exalted atheism:

"The vast majority of men (and he was speaking of devotees) are atheists. I am glad that in modern times another set of atheists has come up in the Western world, the materialists, because they are *sincere* atheists! They are better than these religious atheists, who are insincere, who *talk* about religion, and *fight* about it, yet never want it, never try to *realise* it, never try to understand it. Remember the words of Christ: 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. . . .' These words are literally true, not figures or pictures. . . . But who wants God? . . . We want everything but God. . . ."

Western devotees as well as Eastern may profit by this rough lesson. The unmasker of religious dishonesty fearlessly reveals such camouflaged atheists to themselves.

"Everyone says: 'Love God!' . . . Men do not know what it is to love. . . . Where is love?" Wherever there is neither traffic, nor fear, nor any interest, where there is nothing but love for the love of love.[45]

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[45] More recent homage has been paid to modern materialism by the great Hindu mystic, Aurobindo Ghose. In his articles in the *Arya Review* (No. 2, September 15, 1914) on the *Divine Life* and the *Synthesis of Yoga,* he sees in the scientific and economic materialism of the day a necessary stage of Nature and her work for the progress of the human spirit and of society.

"The whole trend of modern thought and modern endeavour reveals itself to the observant eye as a large conscious effort of Nature in man to effect a general level of intellectual equipment, capacity and further possibility of universalising the opportunities which modern civilisation affords for the mental life. Even the preoccupation of the European intellect, the protagonist of this tendency, with material Nature and the externalities of existence is a necessary part of this effort. It seeks to prepare a sufficient basis in man's physical being and vital energies and in his material environment for his full mental possibilities."

"The right or at least the ultimate means may not always be employed, but their aim is the right preliminary aim,—a sound individual and social body and the satisfaction of the legitimate needs and demands of the material mind, sufficient ease, leisure, equal opportunity, so that the whole of mankind and no longer only the favoured race, class or individual may be free to develop the emotional and intellectual being to its full capacity. At present the material and economic aim may predominate, but always, behind, there works or there waits in reserve the higher and major impulse."

Further he recognises "the enormous, the indispensable utility of the very brief period of rationalistic Materialism through which humanity has been passing. For that vast field of evidence and experience which now begins to reopen its gates to us, can only be safely entered when the intellect has been severely trained to a strict austerity. It became necessary for a time to make a clean sweep at once of the truth and its disguises in order that the road might be clear for a new departure and a surer advance. It is necessary that advancing knowledge should base herself on a clear, pure and disciplined intellect. It is necessary, too, that she should correct her errors sometimes by a return to the restraint of sensible fact, the concrete realities of the physical world. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. 'Earth is His footings' says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self

When the last stage has been reached you will no longer need to know what is going to happen to you, or if God, the creator of the universe, an almighty and pitiful God, a God who rewards the merits of humanity, exists; it will not matter to you even if God is a tyrant or a good God. . . . "The lover has passed beyond all these things, beyond rewards and punishments, beyond fears, or doubts or scientific or any other demonstration. . . ." He loves, he has attained the fact of Love "of which the whole universe is only a manifestation. . . ."

For at this pitch love has lost all human limitations and has taken on a Cosmic meaning:

"What is it that makes atoms come and joins atoms, molecule molecules, sets big planets flying towards each other, attracts man to woman, woman to man, human beings to human beings, animals to animals, drawing the whole universe, as it were, towards one centre? That is what is called love. Its manifestation is from

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that is manifested in the universe. And it is certainly the fact that the wider we extend and the surer we make our knowledge of the physical world, the wider and surer becomes our foundation for the higher knowledge, even for the highest, even for the *Brahmavidya.*"

Here the rationalistic materialism of Europe is accepted and used by Indian thought as a stepping stone to complete knowledge and to the mastery of the Atman.

In another place, in Notes from Lectures and Discoveries (Vol. VI of the *Complete Works,* p. 55 *et seq.*) Vivekananda enumerates five stages in the path of Divine Love:

1. Man is fearful and needs help.
2. He sees God as father.
3. He sees God as mother. (And it is only from this stage that real love begins, for only then does it become intimate and fearless.)
4. He loves for the sake of love—beyond all other qualities, and beyond good and evil.
5. He realises love in Divine union, Unity.

the lowest atom to the highest ideal: omnipresent, all-pervading, everywhere is this love. . . . It is the one motive power that is in the universe. Under the impetus of that love, Christ stands to give up His life for humanity, Buddha for an animal, the mother for the child, the husband for the wife. It is under the impetus of the same love that men are ready to give up their lives for their country, and strange to say, under the impetus of that same love, the thief goes to steal, the murderer to murder; for in these cases, the spirit is the same. . . . The thief has love for gold, the love was there but it was misdirected. So, in all crimes, as well as in all virtuous actions, behind stands that eternal love. . . . The motive power of the universe is love, without which the universe will fall to pieces in a moment, and this love is God."

III—Raja-Yoga

Although Vivekananda preached as his ideal the harmonious practise of the four kinds of Yoga,[46] there was one peculiarly his own, which might almost be called after him; for it is the way of "Discrimination" (Viveka). It is, moreover, the one that should be able to unite the West and the East—Jnana-yoga—the way of "realisation" by "Knowledge," (in other words, the exploration and conquest of the ultimate Essence or Brahman through the mind).

[46] It was this characteristic that struck both Ramakrishna and later Girish:

"Your Swami," said the latter to the monks of Alumbazar, "is as much jnanin and pandit as the lover of God and humanity."

Vivekananda held the reins of the four paths of Truth: love, action, knowledge and energy as in a quadriga, and travelled simultaneously along them all towards Unity.

But the conquest of the Poles is child's play compared to this heroic expedition, wherein science and religion compete with one another and it demands hard and careful training. It cannot be undertaken haphazard, as can the two preceding paths of Work and Love (Karma and Bhakti). A man must be fully armed, equipped and drilled. And that is the office of Raja-yoga. Although it is self-sufficient in its own sphere, it also plays the part of a preparatory school to the supreme Yoga of Knowledge. That is why I have put it at this point in my exposition, and also because it was where Vivekananda himself put it.[47]

Here also as at the end of Karma-yoga we come to an outburst of liberation or ecstasy—supreme Bhakti, where ties uniting men to ordinary existence seem to be so broken that it must either be destroyed or thrown out of equilibrium. The Bhakta has shed forms and symbols and so sect nor church holds him any longer;

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[47] In *Jnana-yoga,* the chapter on the "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," I have instinctively followed Vivekananda in the order he laid down for the four main classes of temperaments and their corresponding yogas. It is, however, a curious fact that Vivekananda did not apply to the second, Bhakti-yoga, the emotional one, the name of "Mysticism" given to it in the West. He reserves this name for the third, the Raja-yoga, the one that analyses and conquers the inner human self. He is thus more faithful than we to the classic meaning of the word "Mystic" which in the feminine implies "the study of spirituality" (Cf. Bossuet) and which we have wrongly used, or rather restricted to the effusions of the heart. In the masculine it seems to me to be the correct term for the Raja-yoghin, "myste", the initiated, μύστης. Aurobindo Ghose put them in a different order in his *Commentaries on the Gita.* He superimposes these three degrees: I. Karma-yoga, which realises disinterested self-sacrifice by works; 2. Jnana-yoga, which is the knowledge of the true nature of self and the world; 3. Bhakti-yoga, which is the search for and the realisation of the supreme *Self,* the fullness of the possession of the Divine Being. *(Essays on the Gita,* first series, chapter 4, 1921.)

none of them are big enough, for he has attained the zone of limitless Love, and has become ONE with it. The Light floods his entire being, annihilating desire, selfishness and egoism. The man has passed along the whole path, through all its stages: he has been son, friend, lover, husband, father, and mother, and is now ONE with his Beloved "I am you and you are me. . . ." And everything is but ONE. . . .[48]

But is there nothing to follow?

He comes down voluntarily from the mountain tops bathed in Light, and turns again to those who have remained at the bottom so that he may help them to ascend.[49]

Raja-yoga is the rajah, the king, of the yogas, and

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[48] Aurobindo Ghose has dedicated some beautiful pages to a new theory of supreme Bhakti which he claims to have deduced from the teachings of the Gita. According to him this super-eminent Bhakti, which is the highest degree of the ascent of the soul, is accompanied by knowledge and does not renounce a single one of the powers of being, but accomplishes them all in their integrity. *(Essays on the Gita.)* It seems to me that in many pages of these essays the thought of Aurobindo Ghose is very close to that of Christian mysticism.

[49] "After attaining super-consciousness the Bhakti descends again to love and worship . . . Pure love has no motive. It has nothing to gain." *(Notes from Lectures.* Vol. II, *loc sit.)*

"Come down! Come down!" Ramakrishna said in order to bring himself back from ecstasy, and he reproached himself and refused to have the happiness attained in union with God so that he might render service to others:

"O Mother, let me not attain these delights, let me remain in my normal state, so that I can be of more use to the world! . . ."

Is it necessary to recall that the Christian Bhakti always knows how to tear itself from the delights of ecstasy, in order to serve his neighbour? Even the wildest transports of the impassioned Ruysbroeck who embraced his God like the spoils of love won in battle, sank at the name of "Charity":

". . . If you are ravished in ecstasy as highly as St. Peter or St. Paul or as anybody you like, and if you hear that a sick man is in need of hot soup, I counsel you to wake from your ecstasy and warm the soup for him. Leave God to serve God; find Him a sign of its royalty is that it is often spoken of as yoga without any further qualification or designation. It is the yoga *par excellence.* If by yoga we mean union with the supreme object (and subject) of Knowledge, Raja-yoga is the experimental psycho-physiological method for its direct attainment.[50] Vivekananda called it "the psychological yoga," since its field of action is the control and absolute mastery of the mind—the first condition of all knowledge, and it achieves its end by concentration.[51]

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and serve Him in His members; you will lose nothing by the change . . ."

(De praecipuis quibusdam virtutibus.)

In this form of divine Love, directed towards the human community, the Christianity of Europe has no rival: for its faith teaches it to consider all humanity as the mystic body of Christ. Vivekananda's wish that his Indian disciples should sacrifice, not only their lives, but their salvation itself in order to save others, has often been realised in the West by pure and ardent souls, like Catherine of Siena and Marie des Vallees, the simple peasant of Coutances in the XIVth century. Her marvellous story has been recently recorded for us by Emile Dermenghen; she demanded of God the pains of hell in order to deliver the unfortunate. "Our Lord refused her, and the more He refused the more she offered herself. 'I fear,' she said to Him, 'that you have not enough torments to give me.'"

[50] The science of Raja-yoga proposes to lay before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of preaching the truth, in the Hindu sense of the living and individual "realisation" of the truth. (*Raja-yoga,* I.)

I have said above that Aurobindo Ghose extends the field of Raja-yoga from knowledge to power, from speculation to action. But I am speaking here only of speculative Raja-yoga as understood by the great authorities on the Vedanta.

[51] Inspired by Patanjali, the great classical theorist of Raja-yoga (whose sūtras are situated by Western Indological science between 400 and 450, A.D.) (Cf. P. Masson-Oursel, *op. cit.,* p. 184 *et seq.*) Vivekananda defined this operation as "the science of restraining the Chitta (the mind) from breaking into Vrittis (modification)." (Vol. VII of the *Complete Works* of the Swami Vivekananda, p. 59.)

Normally we waste our energies. Not only are they squandered in all directions by the tornado of exterior impressions; but even when we manage to shut doors and windows, we find chaos within ourselves, a multitude like the one that greeted Julius Caesar in the Roman Forum; thousands of unexpected and mostly "undesirable" guests invade and trouble us. No inner activity can be seriously effective and continuous until we have first reduced our house to order, and then have recalled and reassembled our herd of scattered energies. "The powers of the mind are like rays of dissipated light; when they are concentrated they illumine. This is our only means of Knowledge." In all countries and at all times learned men or artists, great men of action or of intense meditation, have known and practised it instinctively, each in his own way either consciously or subconsciously as experience dictated. I have shown in the case of Beethoven, to what degree this can be achieved by a Western genius absolutely ignorant of Raja-yoga in the strict sense of the word. But this same example is a signal warning of the dangers of such individual practise when insufficiently understood and controlled.[52]

The originality of Indian Raja-yoga lies in the fact that it has been the subject for centuries past of a minutely elaborated and experimental science for the conquest of concentration and mastery of the mind for centuries past. By mind, the Hindu yogin understands the instrument as well as the object of knowledge, and in what concerns the object he goes very far, farther than I can follow him. It is not that I deny on principle the boundless powers he claims for his science, not only over the soul, but over all nature (in Hindu belief they are indistinguishable). The really scientific attitude is one of reserve with regard to the future possibilities of the mind, since neither its bounds nor extent, by which term I mean its limits, have yet been scientifically fixed. But I rightly condemn the Indian yogin for taking as proved what nobody as yet has been able to prove experimentally. For if such extraordinary powers exist, there seems to be no reason (as even the great Indian, who is both a learned genius and a convinced believer, Sir Jagadis Ch. Bose, said to me) why the ancient Rishis made no use of them to refashion the world.[53] And the worst feature of such foolish promises, akin to those made by the fabulous genii of the Arabian Nights, is that they sink into greedy and empty brains. Even Vivekananda could not always resist this kind of preaching, with its fatal attraction for the dangerous and gluttonous appetite of souls of the most sensual type.[54]

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[52] Cf. my study on the *Deafness of Beethoven,* in Vol. I of *Beethoven: The great Creative Epochs,* p. 335 *et seq.* The Yogins were well aware of it: "All inspired persons," wrote Vivekananda, "who stumbled upon this super-conscious state . . . generally had some quaint superstitions along with their knowledge. They laid themselves open to hallucinations and ran the risk of madness." (*Raja-yoga,* chapter VII.)

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[53] I am well aware that Aurobindo Ghose, who has devoted fifty years of his life in absolute seclusion to these researches has it is said, achieved "realisations" that are destined to transform the realm of the mind as we know it at present. But while credit must be given to his philosophic genius, we are waiting for the discoveries announced by his entourage to be presented to the full and open test of scientific investigation. Strict analysis has never yet accepted experiences of which the experimentalist, however authoritative, was the sole judge and participator. (Disciples do not count, for they are merely the reflection of the master.)

[54] In his *Raja-yoga,* one of his first works, published in America, he spoke rashly (Chapter I) of the powers that could be obtained over nature in a relatively short time (several months) by those who perseveringly followed the practise of Raja-yoga. And the

But Vivekananda was always careful to surround the coveted object, like Brunhilde's [55] rock,[56] with a

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intimate memories that have been communicated to me by his most deeply religious American disciple, Sister Christine, make it discreetly evident, reading between the lines, that mundane preoccupations formed the kernel of the meditations of those, especially the women, who practised Raja-yoga in America. (Cf. Chapter V of Vivekananda's treatise—the effects derived from the yogic practise in beauty of voice and face.) It is true that the young Swami, filled as he was with faith, could hardly have foreseen the frivolous interpretation put upon his words. As soon as he saw it, he protested emphatically. But one must never "tempt the devil", as one of our proverbs has it. If we do the devil takes advantage of us, and we are fortunate if we escape with nothing worse than ridicule; ridicule itself is often only a step removed from the obscene. There are other and less scrupulous Yogins who have traded upon its attractions and made Raja-yogism a receiving office for men and women greedy for this totally different kind of conquest.

[55] Allusion to the Nibelungen Legend in Wagner's opera—the Valkyrie.

[56] Far from recognising supernatural powers as the reward of yogic efforts, Vivekananda, like all great yogins, regarded them as a temptation similar to that suffered by Jesus on the top of the mountain when the devil offered him the kingdoms of this world. (It is clear to me that in the legend of Christ that moment corresponded to the last stage but one of His personal yoga.) If he had not rejected this temptation all the fruits of yoga would have been lost . . . (*Raja-yoga,* chap. VII):

"Different powers will come to the yogi, and if he yields to the temptations of any one of these the road to his further progress will be barred . . . But if he is strong enough to reject even these miraculous powers he will attain . . . the complete suppression of the waves in the ocean of the mind." He will attain divine Union. But it is only too evident that the ordinary man troubles himself little about this union and prefers the good things of the world.

(I would add that to an idealistic free-thinker, as I am, who naturally unites scientific scepticism to spiritual faith, such so-called "supernatural powers", as lie to the hand of the yogin and are repulsed by him are in fact illusory since he has never tried them. But this is unimportant. What matters is that the mind is convinced of their reality and voluntarily sacrifices them. The sacrifice is the only reality that counts.)

fivefold ring of fire. None but the hero can bear away the prize. Even the first stage is unattainable—the *yama* or mastery—without the realisation of five indispensable conditions, each one sufficient to make a saint:

1. *Ahimsa*, the great aim of Gandhi, which the old yogins considered to be the highest virtue and happiness of mankind: "no hurt" to all nature, the "doing no evil" in act, word, thought to any living being:
2. *Absolute truth:* "truth in action, word, thought": for truth is the foundation of all things whereby all things are attained:
3. *Perfect chastity* or brahmacharya:
4. *Absolute non-covetousness:*
5. *Purity of soul and absolute disinterestedness:* not to accept or to expect any gift: every accepted gift is prejudicial to independence and is death to the soul.[57]

Hence it is clear that the common herd who seek in yoga a fraudulent means to "succeed," those who wish to cheat fate, dabblers in the occult and clients of Beauty Parlours will find "No road" barring the way when they arrive at the outer ring of fortification. But most of them are careful not to read the notice; and they try to coax the more or less authentic Guru, who guards the door, to allow them to enter.

That is why Vivekananda, as he became aware of the danger of certain words for weak and unscrupulous moral natures avoided their use.[58] And he tended more and more to restrict his instructions in Raja-yoga to the conquest of Knowledge by the most perfect instrument of scientific method: absolute Concentration.[59]

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[57] Cf. *Raja-yoga,* chapter VIII, the summing up of Kurma Purana—and Vol. VI of the *Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda,* p. 55 *et seq.*

[58] He recognised this more and more as he gained experience. To an Indian disciple who asked him about the different ways of salvation, he said, "In the path of Yoga (Raja) there are many obstacles. Perhaps the spirit will run after psychic powers; and

And in this we are all interested. Whatever may be the effect upon the mind produced with this instrument by the Hindu seeker after truth, all seekers after truth whether of the West or of the East are all obliged to use that instrument; and it is to their advantage that it should be as exact and perfect as possible. There is nothing of the occult in it. Vivekananda's sane intelligence had the same aversion to all that was secret and hidden in the searchings of the mind as the most devoted and learned Westerner:

". . . There is no mystery in what I teach. . . . Anything that is secret and mysterious in these systems of Yoga should be at once rejected. . . . Discard everything that weakens you. Mystery-mongering weakens the human brain. It has well nigh destroyed Yoga—one of the grandest of sciences. . . . You must practise and see whether these things happen or not. . . . There is neither mystery nor danger in it. . . .[60] It is wrong to believe blindly. . . ." [61]

Nobody condemns more categorically the slightest

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thus it will be turned back from attaining its real nature. The path of Bhakti or devotion to God is easy in practise, but progress in it is slow. Only the way of Jnana (intelligence) is rapid and sure, rational and universal."

(Vol. VII, p. 193 *et seq. Complete Works.*)

[59] "Give up . . . this nibbling at things. Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life; think of it; dream of it; live on that idea" until it becomes the substance of your whole body. (*Raja-yoga,* chapter VI.)

[60] All the same Vivekananda elsewhere lays down wise and prudent rules for the physical and moral hygiene of those who wish to practise yoga.

[61] *Raja-yoga,* Chapter I.

abdication of self mastery, however partial or transient, into the hands of strangers. And it is this that makes him protest so violently against all kinds of suggestion, however honest and well-intentioned.

"The so-called hypnotic suggestion can only act upon a weak mind . . . and excite in the patient a sort of morbid Pratyahara. . . . It is not really controlling the brain centres by the power of one's own will, but is, as it were, stunning the patient's mind for the time being by sudden blows which another's will delivers to it. . . . Every attempt at control which is not voluntary is . . . disastrous. It . . . only rivets one link more to the already existing heavy chain of bondage. . . . Therefore beware how you let yourselves be acted upon by others . . . even if they succeed in doing good . . . for a time. . . . Use your own minds . . . control body and mind yourselves, remember that until you are a diseased person, no extraneous will can work upon you; avoid everyone, however great and good he may be, who asks you to believe blindly. . . . It is healthier for the individual or the race to remain wicked than to be made apparently good by such morbid extraneous control. . . . Beware of everything that takes away your freedom."[62]

In his unwavering passion for mental freedom he, like Tolstoy, although an artist by race and a born musician, went so far as to reject the dangerous power of artistic emotion, especially that produced by music, over the exact working of the mind.[63] Anything that runs the risk of making the mind less independent to carry out its own observations and experiments, even if it seems to bring about temporary relief and well-being, has in it the "seed of future decadence, of crime, of folly and of death."

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[62] *ibid.* Chapter VI.

[63] It is not that a real Yoga of art does not exist in India. And here Vivekananda's own brother, Mohendra Nath Dutt, an artist and profound thinker, has filled in the lines indicated by the Master. I cannot urge European aesthetes too strongly to read his *Dissertation on Painting* (dedicated to the memory of

I do not believe that the most exacting scientific mind ever gave utterance to more pronounced views; and Western reason must agree with the principles enunciated by Vivekananda.

It makes it all the more astonishing that Western reason has taken so little into account the experimental research of Indian Raja-yogins, and that it has not tried to use the methods of control and mastery, which they offer in broad daylight without any mystery, over the one infinitely fragile and constantly warped instrument that is our only means of discovering what exists.

While admitting with no possibility of contradiction, that yogist psycho-physiology uses explanations—and still more terms—that are both controvertible and obso-

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Brahmananda, the first Abbot of the Ramakrishna Mission, with a preface by Abindranath Tagore—ed. B.K. Chatterjee, 1922, Calcutta, *Seva Series Publishing Home*). The great Indian religious artist places himself face to face with the object he wishes to represent in the attitude of a yogin in search of Truth: to him the object becomes the subject; and the process of contemplation is that of the strictest yogic "discrimination":

"In representing an ideal the painter really represents his own spirit, his dual self, through the medium of exterior objects. In a profound state of identification the inner and outer layers of the spirit are separated; the external layer or the variable part of the spirit is identified with the object observed, and the constant or unchanging part remains the serene observer. The one is 'Lila' (the play), the other 'Nitya' (Eternity). We cannot say what is beyond, for it is 'Avatyam', the inexpressible state . . ."

It is not astonishing that many great Indian artists, who have passed through this discipline have finally become saints. (Cf. also the *Dance of Shiva,* by A. Coomaraswamy, translated by Madeleine Rolland, Edition Rieder.)

lete, it should be easy to rectify them by readjusting (as Vivekananda tried to do) the experiments of past centuries to modern science. To make up for their lack of laboratories Hindu observers have possessed age-long patience and a genius for intuition. There can be no doubt on this point in the light of such pregnant lines on the nature of living bodies as the following in the most ancient sacred texts:

"The body is the name given to a series of changes. . . . As in a river the mass of water changes every moment and other masses come to take its place, so is it with the body."[64]

Religious faith in India has never been allowed to run counter to scientific laws; moreover, the former is never made a preliminary condition for the knowledge they teach, but they are always scrupulously careful to take into consideration the possibility that lay reason, both agnostic and atheist, may attain truth in its own way. Thus Raja-yoga admits two distinct divisions; Maha-yoga, which imagines the unity of the Ego with God, and Abhava-yoga (abhavas—non-existence), which studies the Ego "as zero and bereft of duality"[65] —and both may be the object of pure and strict scientific observation.[66] Such tolerance may astonish religious believers in the West, but it is an integral part of Vedantic belief to regard the human spirit as God who is as yet unaware of Himself, but who is capable of being brought to know Himself.[67] Such a *credo* is not far from the secret or avowed aim of Science, and so is not strange to us.

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[64] It is unnecessary to underline the similarity of this conception to that of the Eleates. Deussen, in his *System of the Vedantas* has compared Heraclitus doctrine on the perpetual instability of the soul "complex" to Hindu doctrines.

The fundamental idea is that the universe is made out of one substance, whose form is perpetually changing. "The sum total of energy remains always the same" (*Raja-yoga*, chapter III).

[65] *Raja-yoga* chapter VIII—Summary from *Kurma Purana.*

[66] "In the study of this Raja-yoga no faith or belief is necessary. Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself . . . Every human being has the right and the power to seek for religion." (*Raja-yoga*, chapter I).

Further, Hindu religious psycho-physiology is entirely materialistic up to a certain stage, which is placed very high, since it goes beyond the "mind." In tracing the genesis of perception from the impressions received of exterior objects to the nerve and brain centres where they are stored and thence to the mind—all the stages are material; but the mind is made of more subtle matter although it does not differ in essence from the body. It is only in the higher stage that the non-material *soul* occurs, the *Purusha,* which receives its perceptions from its instrument, the mind, and then transmits its orders to the motive centres. As a result positive science can walk hand in hand with Hindu faith for three quarters of the way. It is only at the last stage but one that she will cry "Halt!" And so all I ask here is that the two shall go those first three quarters of the way together. For I believe it is possible that Hindu explorers in the course of their travels have seen many objects which have escaped our eyes. Let us profit from their discoveries without renouncing in any way our right to the free exercise of our critical faculties with regard to them.

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[67] For Hindus as for Buddhists human birth is the highest stage that the Being has reached on the road to realisation; and that is why a man must make haste to profit by it. Even the gods, or *devas* in the polytheistic sense, only achieve freedom by passing through human birth. (*ibid.,* chapter III.)

I cannot find room within the limits of this book for a detailed examination of raja-yogic methods. But I recommend it to Western masters of the new psychology, and of pedagogy in so far as it is scientifically founded of the physiology of the mind. I myself have derived much benefit from their remarkable analysis; and while it is too late to apply their teachings in my own life, I admire the way they have explained the past experiences of my life, with all its mistakes and obscure instincts towards salvation.

But the three first psychological stages in the concentration of the mind must be mentioned:[68] *Pratyahara,*[69] which turns the organs of sense away from exterior things and directs them towards entirely mental impressions; —*Dharana,* which forces the mind to fix its attention on a special and given point, either outwardly or inwardly;—*Dhyana* (properly speaking meditation) when the mind, trained by the preceding exercises has acquired the power of "running in an uninterrupted current towards a chosen point."

It is only when the first stage has been mastered that character begins to form according to Vivekananda. But "How hard it is to control the mind. Well has it been compared to the maddened monkey. . . . Incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire . . . the sting . . . of jealousy . . . and pride enters the mind." Then what does the master advise? The exercise of the will? No, he came earlier than our psychological doctors who have but tardily realised that the clumsy application of the will against some mental habit often provokes that habit to a violent reaction. He teaches mastery of the "monkey" by letting it grow quiet under the calm inner regard that judges it impartially. The ancient yogins did not wait for Dr. Frued to teach them that the best cure for the mind is to make it look its deeply-hidden monsters straight in the face:

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[68] They are preceded by exercises of a physiological nature—of great interest to medical science: *Asana* (or posture), and *prana yama* (control of the breath). These are followed by the higher state of the mind, *Samadhi,* where "the Dhyana is intensified to the point of rejecting the exterior part of meditation and all sensible forms, and remains in meditation upon one inner or abstract part, until thought is absorbed in Unity." We shall return to this condition when we study the yoga of knowledge (jnana).

[69] The meaning of the word is: "gathering towards."

"The first lesson then is to sit for some time and let the mind run on. The mind is bubbling up all the time. It is like that monkey jumping about. Let the monkey jump as much as he can—you simply wait and watch. . . . Many hideous thoughts may come in to it; Knowledge is power . . . you will find that each day the mind's vagaries are becoming less and less violent. . . . It is tremendous work. . . . Only after a patient, continuous struggle for years can we succeed." [70]

Hence before proceeding to the next stage, the yogin must have learnt to use the play of imagination in order to discipline the mind to fix itself on one point.

But the Master was always preoccupied with matters physiological. Avoid fatigue. "Such exercises are not designed to follow the rough work of the day." Pay attention to diet. "A strict diet from the first milk and cereals"; all stimulant is forbidden.[71] Inner phenomena are observed and described with praiseworthy acumen.[72] At first during the conquest of concentration the least sensation is like a stupendous wave: "A pin dropping makes a noise like thunder." . . . Hence it is very important to supervise the organism closely, and to keep it absolutely calm, since that is the desired aim. Obviously constant care must be taken to avoid all unhealthy overstrain. Otherwise the result will be a deranged system and an unbalanced mind, which Western clumsiness has hastily concluded to be the inevitable and exaggerated characteristics of an ecstatic or of an inspired artist like Beethoven.[73]

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[70] Even prescriptions analagous to those of Dr. Coue are to be found with the yogins—the method of auto-suggestion, which makes the patient repeat a beneficient statement. The yogin counsels the novice to repeat mentally at the beginning of his exercises: "May all beings be happy!" so as to surround himself with an atmosphere of peace.

The master yogin claims on the contrary that physical health benefits from his discipline as much as moral health. He says that its effects ought to become quickly apparent in repose of body, relaxation of features and even the tone of the voice. It is only natural that these have been the advantages emphasized by the worldly disciples of all yogins whether true or false. Let them do so! From so rich a storehouse of experience, embracing as it does so many different aspects of the body and mind, each may glean for his own granary. Our concern here is only with psychologists and learned men![74]

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[71] Absolute chastity. Without it Raja-yoga is attended with the greatest dangers. Hindu observers maintain that each man possesses a constant quantity of total energy; but this energy can be transferred from one centre to another. Sexual energy when used by the brain is transformed into mental energy. But if to use one of our popular expressions, a man "burns the candle at both ends" physical and mental ruin is the result. Yoga followed under such conditions leads to worse aberrations.

Add what contemplative souls in Europe have too often neglected, hygiene and perfect cleanliness. The "purity" demanded by the rules of yoga embraces the double "obligation of the two purities, moral and physical. No one can be a yogi until he has both."

(*Raja-yoga,* Chapter VIII, summary of the Kurma Purana.)

[72] Sometimes sounds like those of a distant carillon are heard fading into one continuous accord. Points of light appear . . . etc.

[73] "He who fasts, he who keeps awake, he who sleeps much, he who works too much, he who does no work, none of these can be a *Yogi.*" (*Raja-yoga,* Chapter I.)

"Do not practise when the body feels very lazy or ill, or when the mind is very miserable or sorrowful." (*ibid.,* Chapter VIII.)

IV—Jnana-Yoga

The upward surge of the spirit towards the truth wherein it may find freedom, can occur—as we have seen—under different forms: as *Amor Caritas* or disinterested Work, or mind control having as its object the conquest of the laws governing the inner mechanism. To each of these forms Raja-yoga teaches the fingering whereby the psycho-physiological piano may be played; for nothing firm and lasting is possible without the preliminary apprenticeship of concentration. But it is peculiarly essential for one of them if mastery is to be attained, although it possesses its own independent path. This brings us to the last we have to examine, they are closely bound up with Raja-yoga: Jnana-yoga, the rationalist and philosophical yoga. In so far as Raja-yoga is the science of the control of inner conditions, the philosopher has to go to it in order to control his instrument of thought. Even Vivekananda, the great "Discriminator," recognised that in this path, so essentially his own—that of "discrimination" in the sense of philosophic analysis and experiment—jnana—"the spirit can be caught in the endless network of vain disputation," and that nothing but the practise of raja-yogic concentration can enable it to escape through the net.

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[74] Without going outside the plane of the observable and probable, it has actually been proved that sovereign control of the inner life can put our unconscious or subconscious life partially if not entirely, into our hands. "Almost every action of which we are now unconscious can be brought to the plane of consciousness." (Raja-yoga, Chapter VII.) It is a well known fact that the yogins have the power to stop or provoke physiological acts, that are quite beyond the scope of will power; such as the beating of the heart. Strict scientific observation has established the reality of these facts and we ourselves have proved them. The yogin is convinced that "every being, however small he may be, has in reserve an immense storehouse of energies." And there is nothing in this eminently virile and strengthening belief that can be denied on principle; the constant progress of science rather tends to confirm it. But the yogin's peculiar quality (and this should be viewed with caution) is to think that he can by his methods of intensified concentration quicken the rhythm of individual progress and shorten the time necessary for the complete evolution of humanity. That belief is the basis of the new researches of Aurobindo Ghose, based upon a saying of Vivekananda in his *"Synthesis of Yoga"* that "yoga may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life of a few years or even a few months of bodily existence." I very much doubt it. But my doubt is scientific. It does not deny. It waits for the proof of facts.

It is therefore only logical that our exposition should come last to this high method of the mind, which was at the same time the one preeminently dear to Vivekananda. He devoted so much more study to it and so many lectures that he was unable to condense them into treatises, as was the case with Raja-yoga and Karma-yoga, both written at his dictation.[75]

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[75] The voluminous compilation of Jnana-yoga is a somewhat artificial collection of separate lectures, most of them given in London in 1896. They are to be found in Volume II of the *Complete Works,* pp. 57-460. Other fragments scattered throughout the *Complete Works* must be added: that of *Introduction to Jnana-yoga,* Vol. VII, p. 39 *et seq.—Discourses on the Yogas,* Vol. VI, pp. 55 *et seq.*

The first striking thing about it is that, although, like the other yogas, its aim is the absolute Being, its starting point and methods are much nearer those of the scientific than of the religious spirit of the West. It invokes both science and reason in no uncertain tones.

"Experience is the only source of knowledge."[76]

"No one of these Yogas gives up reason . . . or asks you to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever. . . . Each one of them tells you to *cling* to your reason, to hold fast to it."[77]

And Jnana-yoga magnifies reason; its devoted help-mate, to the highest degree. It follows, therefore, that religion must be tested by the same laws as the other sciences.

"The same methods of investigation which we apply to the sciences and to exterior knowledge, should they be applied to the science of religion? I say: 'Yes,' and I would add, 'The sooner the better.' If a religion is destroyed by such investigation it was nothing but a useless and unworthy superstition; the sooner it disappeared the better. I am absolutely convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen.[78] All that was dross would be taken away: but the essential parts would emerge triumphant from such investigation."[79]

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[76] *Reason and Religion,* VI, 47.

[77] *The Ideal of a Universal Religion II,* 373.

[78] I am not certain that his good master, Ramakrishna, who was always the "brother" of the weak, would have approved of the uncompromising attitude adopted by his great intellectual and imperious disciple. He would have reminded him again that there is more than one door to a house, and that it is impossible to make everyone come in by the front entrance. In this I believe that Gandhi is nearer than Vivekananda to the universal "welcome" of Ramakrishna. But the fiery disciple would have been the first to blame himself afterwards with great humility.

What right has religion to claim to be above the control of reason?

"Why religion should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason no one knows. . . . For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred millions of Gods on the authority of anybody." It degrades human nature and brings it to the level of the beast. We must reason. . . . Perhaps these are prophets who have passed the limits of sense and obtained a glimpse of the beyond. We shall believe it only when we can do the same ourselves; not before.[80]

"It has been said that reason is not strong enough; it does not always help us to get the Truth; many times it makes mistakes, and therefore the conclusion is that we must believe in the authority of a church! That was said to me by a Roman Catholic, but I could not see the logic of it. On the other hand I should say, if reason be so weak, a body of priests would be weaker, and I am not going to accept their verdict, but I will abide by my reason, because with all its weakness there is some chance of my getting at truth through it. . . . We should therefore, follow reason, and also sympathise with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason. For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in millions of Gods on the authority of anybody. What we want is progress. . . . No theories ever made man higher. . . . The only power is in realisation and that lies in ourselves and comes from thinking. Let men think. . . . The glory of man is that he is a thinking being. . . . I believe in reason and follow reason, having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority."[81]

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[79] *Jnana-yoga,* II.

[80] Fifteen years before, Keshab Chunder Sen, said the same thing in his *Epistle to his Indian Brethren:* (1880).

"You must accept nothing on trust as do the superstitious. Science will be your religion, as said the Lord, Our God. You will respect science above all other things: the science of matter above the Vedas, and the science of the spirit above the Bible. Astronomy and geology, anatomy and physiology, botany and chemistry are the Living Scriptures of the God of nature. Philosophy, logic, ethics, yoga, inspiration and prayers are the Scriptures of the God of the soul. In the 'New Faith' (that is to say the one that he was preaching) everything is scientific. Do not mystify your mind with occult mysteries. Do not give yourselves up to dreams and fantasies. But with clear vision and sound judgment, untroubled, prove all things and hold fast what has been proved. In all your beliefs and prayers, faith and reason ought to harmonise into a true Science."

The basis of both science and religion (as Vivekananda understood it) being the same—knowledge or reason—there is no essential difference between them, except in their application; Vivekananda even regarded them as having the same acceptation. He once said that "All human knowledge is but a part of religion."[82] Here he made religion the sum of all knowledge. But at other times with proud independence he extolled "those expressions of religion whose heads as it were, are penetrating more into the secrets of heaven, though their feet are clinging to earth, I mean the so-called materialistic sciences."[83] "Science and religion are both attempts to help us out of the slavery; only religion is the more ancient, and we have the superstition (notice this word in the mouth of a passionate believer!) that it is the more holy. . . .[84] In what then do they differ? In the field of their application.

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[81] *Practical Vedanta,* II, 333.

[82] Vol. VII, p. 101.

[83] Vol. II. p. 68.

"Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world, just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world." [85]

And because the field is different so the method of investigation ought to be different too. That laid down by Vivekananda for religious science, the one belonging to Jnana-yoga, is opposed to what he thinks defective in that modern science: the comparative history of religions, as studied in the West. Without underrating the interest of such historic researches and their ingenious theories about the origin of ancestral religions, Vivekananda maintains that their methods are too "Exterior," to account for so essentially "interior" an order of facts. It is true that the outward appearance of the body and face can, to the practised eye, reveal the constitution and state of health. But without a knowledge of anatomy and physiology it is impossible to know the nature of a living being. In the same way a religious fact can only be known through the acquired practise of introspective observation; this method is essentially psychological, even infra-psychological: a chemistry of the spirit; the purpose is to discover the first element, the cell, the atom!

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[84] Vol. VII, p. 101. Vivekananda it is true adds that "in a sense it is because it makes morality a vital point: and science neglects this side." But this expression: "in a sense" safeguards the independence of other points of view.

[85] Vol. VI, 47. Let us not forget the vital word "combat", already mentioned. It is characteristic of Vivekananda's warrior spirit. To him the work both of science and religion is no cold search for truth, but a hand to hand struggle.

"*Man is man, so long as he is struggling to rise above nature,* and this nature is both internal and external. Not only does it comprise the laws that govern the particles of matter outside us and in our bodies, but also the more subtle nature within, which is, in fact, the motive power governing the external. It is good and very grand to conquer external nature, but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. . . . This conquering of the inner man belongs entirely to religion."

(*Jnana-yoga,* I. The necessity of Religion.)

"If I know a particle of a lump of clay, I should know the whole of its nature, its birth, its growth, its decline and its end. Between the part and the whole there is no difference but time. The cycle is completed more or less rapidly."

In this case the first essential is to practise inner analysis in order to discover the spiritual atom. When it has been discovered and sifted into its primary elements, they can then be re-arranged and the next step is to attempt to deduce the principles. "The intellect has to build the house; but it cannot do so without brick, and alone it cannot make bricks."[86] Jnana-yoga is the surest method of penetrating to the bottom of the elemental facts, and it is at this stage that it is allied to the practical methods of Raja-yoga.

First the physiology of the mind: the sensorial and motor organs, the brain centres, must be minutely studied; then the substance—spirit, which according to the Sankhya philosophy is part of matter distinct from the soul. This must be followed by a dissection of the mechanism of the perceptions and their intellectual processes. The real exterior universe is an unknown X. The universe that we know is x + (or —) the mind (in its function as a perceptive faculty) which gives it the imprint of its own conditions. The mind can only know itself through the medium of the mind. It is an unknown y + (or —) the conditions of the mind. Kant's analysis was familiar to Vivekananda. But centuries before Kant, Vedantic philosophy had already predicated and even surpassed it,[87] according to Vivekananda's testimony.

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[86] *Introduction to Jnana-yoga*, Vol. VI, p. 39 *et seq.*

Spiritual work groups itself into two different and complimentary stages: *Pravritti, Nivritti:* to advance and then retire in a circular movement. Wise metaphysical and religious method begins with the second of them: Negation or Limitation.[88] Like Descartes, the jnanin makes a clean sweep and seeks a point of stability before he starts rebuilding. The first essential is to test the foundations and to eliminate all causes of illusion and error. The Jnana-yoga is therefore primarily a searching critic of the conditions of knowledge: time, space, causality etc., and it reconnoitres the frontiers of the mind in detail before it crosses them.

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But who gives him permission to cross them? What is it that convinces him that beyond the conditions of the mind the real x or y exist, the only reality? Here is obviously the point of bifurcation between the religious and the scientific spirit, that have travelled so far as companions. But even here at the parting of the ways they are still very close to each other. For what is implied in the two pursuits of religion and science? The search for Unity—whatever may be its nature—and a tacit faith in itself—that by means of the mind it will be able to lay down provisionally such a pregnant hypothesis that it will be capable of being immediately perceived and definitely accepted, and such an intense and profound intuition that it will enlighten all future investigation.

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[87] Lecture given at Harvard on the *Vedanta Philosophy* (March 25, 1896) and introduction to *Jnana-yoga.*

[88] Lectures given in London on *Maya*, October, 1896, II, *Maya and the Evolution of the Conception of God.*

"Do you not see whither science is tending? The Hindu nation proceeded through the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they too are coming to the same results. We find that searching through the mind we at last come to that Oneness, that Universal One, the Internal Soul of everything, the Essence, the Reality of everything. . . . Through material science we come to the same Oneness. . . ." [89]

"Science is nothing but the finding of Unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress because it would reach the goal. Thus chemistry could not progress further, when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations . . . and the science of religion become perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in the universe of death. . . . Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science." [90]

Unity then is the necessary hypothesis upon which the constructions of science rest. In the science of religion this supposed, essential Unity has the value of the

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[89] *Complete Works,* Vol. II, p. 140.

[90] *Complete Works,* Vol. I, p. 12-13.

Absolute.[91] And the work of Jnana-yoga, when it has explored and delimited the finite, is to connect itself to this keystone of the infinite, by parting the fragile and closely interlaced spiders webs of the intersecting arcs.

But it is in this web of the spirit that the religious savant of India definitely parts company with the only methods acceptable to the European rationalist. In order to bridge the gulf between the bounds of his senses and the Absolute, he appeals within his own organism to a new order of experiences that have never been countenanced by Western science. And this to him is Religious Experience, in the true meaning of the word.

I have just spoken of the "bricks" with which "the intellect has to build the house." Those of the Indian yogin lain, remained unused in our workshops.

Western science proceeds by experiment and reason. In neither case does it attempt to come out of the circle of relativity, either with regard to external nature or its own mind. Its hypothesis of Unity as the pivot of phenomena remains suspended in the void; it is less an essence than a provisional premise, although it is the vital link in the chain of reason and fact. But as long as the nail holds, nobody either knows or cares to know to what it is fixed.

The Vedantic sage admires the divinatory courage (however it may seek to excuse its daring) of Western science and the integrity of its work; but he does not believe that its methods can ever lead him to the attainment of that Unity which is absolutely essential to him.[92] It appears to him that Western religions can no more free themselves from the anthropomorphic conception of their Gods,[93] than the sciences can rise beyond a Reality having the same stature as the human mind.[94] But the universe that contains all the universes must be found. The solution of the problem is the discovery of the *nescio quid* which is to be the common property of the whole universe, of the lower as well as of the higher worlds. The ancient thinkers of India declared that the further they went from the centre the more marked differentiation became, and the nearer they approached to the centre the more they perceived the nearness of Unity. "The external world is far away from the centre; and so there is no common ground in it where all the phenomena of existence can meet." There are other phenomena besides that of the exterior world: mental, moral and intellectual phenom-

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[91] *Lectures on Maya,* IV, The Absolute and Manifestation.

[92] He is perhaps wrong. Science has not said its last word. Einstein has appeared since Vivekananda. He never foresaw the

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"Transcendental Pluralism" whose latent germs in the new thought of the West are rising from the furrow ploughed by wars and revolutions. Cf. Boris Yakowenko: *Vom Wesen des Pluralismus,* (1928, Bonn), which has taken as its motto the words of H. Rickort: *"Das All ist nur als Vielheit zu begreifen."* (The whole is only intelligible in multiplicity.)

[93] Here he is quite wrong. Unfortunately the Indian Vedantist is ignorant of the deep meaning of great Christian mysticism, which transcends, first as does the highest Vedantism, the limits of the images and forms employed by and for popular anthropomorphism. But it is to be feared that Christian teachers of the second rank with whom he has had to deal are almost as ignorant.

[94] It would not appear that Vivekananda was familiar with the high speculations of modern science, nor with mathematics of several dimensions, non-Euclidian geometry, the "logic of the infinite", and epistemology, "the science of sciences" of the Cantorians, "which ought to teach us what the sciences would be if there were no learned men." (Cf. Henri Poincaré, *Dernières Pensées* and *La Science de l'Hypothèse.*) But it is probable that he would have sought to turn them in some way to the science of religion. And as a matter of fact I can see in them, flashes of a religion as yet unaware of itself, the most vital flame of modern Western faith.

ena; there are various planes of existence: if only one is explored the whole cannot be explained. The necessary condition is then to attain the centre from which all the diverse planes of existence start. This centre is within us. The ancient Vedantists, in the course of their explorations, finally discovered that at the innermost core of the soul was the centre of the whole universe.[95] Therefore it must be reached. The mine must be drilled, dug seen and touched. And that is the real function of religion, in the Hindu sense, since, as we have seen, it is primarily if not entirely a question of *fact*. Vivekananda goes so far as to dare to write: "It is better not to believe than not to have felt," (that is to say, perceived and experimented). Here the strange scientific need that was always mixed with his religion emerges clearly.

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[95] *Jnana-yoga:* Realisation (October 29, 1896). Vivekananda gives a general analysis of the Katha Upanishad, and in particular paraphrases the profound legend of young Nachiketas, a seeker after truth, talking to the beautiful God of death, Yama.

Christian mysticism has made the same discovery. It is the rock bottom of the soul, *"der allerverborgenste, innerste, tiefe Grund der Seele."* "Sometimes it is called the ground, sometimes the peak of the soul," said the great Tauler. "The soul is this profundity has a likeness and ineffable nearness to God . . . In this deepest, most inner and most secret depth of the soul, God essentially, really and substantially exists."

And by God the whole universe is necessarily implied.

"The particular quality of this centre (of the soul)," so writes the Salesian, J. P. Camus, "is to assemble in a lofty fashion the whole action of the powers, and to give them the same impetus that the first motive power gave to the spheres inferior to it."

Traité de la Reformation intérieure selon l'esprit du François de Sales, Paris, 1631, Cf. Brémond; *Metaphysique des Saints,* Vol. I, p. 56.

The entire treatise is devoted to the exploration of this "Centre of the soul." And this voyage of exploration has naturally a cosmic character as with the Vedantists.

Moreover this special science claims to make use of special transcendental experiments.

"Religion," says Vivekananda, "proceeds from the struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. It must there discover its 'true germ.' "[96] "In all organised religions their founders . . . are declared to have gone into states of mind, . . . in which they came face to face with a new series of facts, relating to what is called the spiritual kingdom.[97] Thus a tremendous statement is made by all religons: that the human mind at certain moments transcends not only the limitations of the senses, but also the power of reasoning," and that it then comes into the presence of facts outside the realm of the senses and reason.[98]

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[96] *Jnana-yoga. The Necessity of Religion* (a lecture given in London).

Vivekananda imagined that the first impulsion to this research came to mankind through dreams that communicated to him the first confused notion of immortality. "Mankind found out . . . that during the dream state it is not that man has a fresh existence . . . But by this time the search had begun . . . and they continued inquiring more deeply into the different stages of the mind, and discovered higher states than either the waking or the dreaming."

[97] *ibid.* "Some exception," adds Vivekananda, "may be taken in the case of the Buddhists . . . But even the Buddhists find an eternal moral law, and that moral law was not reasoned out in our sense of the word, but Buddha found it, discovered it, in a supersensuous state."

[98] It is worth noticing that, after Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, has gone one step further, and replaced intuition among the normal processes of the scientific spirit.

"The fault of practical reason is its excessive submission to the apparent fact, the reality of which it can test at once, and its lack of sufficient courage to carry the deepest facts of potentialities to their logical conclusion. That which is, is only the realisation of an anterior potentiality in the same way that the present potentiality is only an index of a posterior realisation. . . ." *(The Divine Life.)*

Naturally we are not obliged to believe these facts without having first seen and proved them. Our Hindu friends will not be surprised if we maintain a sane reserve with regard to them. We merely follow their own rule of scientific doubt:—"If thou hast not touched, believe not!" And Vivekananda affirms that if there has ever been one single experience in some branch of knowledge, has ever taken place once, it might have taken place before and ought to be possible to reproduce afterwards. The inspired person has no right to claim the special privilege, that it should not be repeated. If then certain truths (those of the highest order) are the fruits of the religious experience of certain "chosen" people, such religious experiences must inevitably happen again. And the object of the science

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"Intuition exists, as veiled, behind our mental operations. Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown, which are only the beginning of his higher consciousness. Logical reason only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can make from this rich harvest. Intuition gives us the idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be: this something always seems to us to be in contradiction to our less advanced reason, and to our normal experience; and it drives us to include the formless perception in our positive ideas of God, of Immortality, etc., and we use it to explain Him to the mind."

So intuition plays the part of quartermaster and intelligence of the Mind, while reason is the rank and file of the army bringing up the rear. The two are not separated, as in Vivekanda's case, by a kind of ceiling between two floors. There is continuity as of a wave, or of all the currents belonging to the regular river of Knowledge. The limits of science have disappeared. Even the ideas of God and Immortality, etc., and all that constituted religion properly speaking, are, according to Aurobindo, no more than means whereby the soul expresses that distant life of Reality, which today precedes logical reason, but which reason will attain to on the morrow.

This is the stage of progress arrived at today by the mind of India in its conception of the "living," the "living whole," wherever religious intuition is incorporated within the strict limits of science.

of Raja-yoga is to lead the mind to this very region of experiment.[99]

It is open to every single person to attempt this auto-education! But here I merely wish to show the final result of these observations: namely that in all organised religions of a higher order, when abstract spiritual facts have been discovered and perceived, they are then condensed into one Unity, "either in the form of an Abstract Presence, of an Omnipresent Being, of an

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[99] "Fixing the mind on the lotus of the heart or on the centre of the head, is what is called *Dharans.* Limited to one spot, making that spot the base, a particular kind of mental wave rises; these are not swallowed up by other kinds of waves, but by degrees become prominent, while all the others recede and finally disappear; next the multiplicity of these waves gives place to unity and one wave only is left in the mind, this is *Dhyana,* meditation. When no basis is necessary, when the whole of the mind has become one wave, one formedness, it is called *Samadhi.* Bereft of all help from places and centres, only the meaning of thought is present (that is to say, the inner part of perception, of which the object was the effect). If the mind can be fixed on the centre for twelve seconds it will be a *Dharana,* twelve such *Dharanas* will be a *Dhyana,* and twelve such *Dhyanas* will be a *Samadhi.*" And that is pure bliss of spirit. . . .

(*Raja-yoga,* Chapter VIII, summary freely translated from the Kurma, Purana.)

For curiosity's sake I have given this ancient summary of the mechanics of intellectual operation, but I would not urge anybody to abandon themselves to it without due consideration; for such exercises of lofty inward tension are never without danger; Indian masters have always put rash experimenters on their guard. For my part I hold that reason is so weak in modern post-war Europe that what remains should not be endangered by abnormalities—at least unless the scientific will is sufficiently developed to exercise a strict control over their effects. It is for observers of this order that I have given this train of objective research. I am appealing to free and firm reason. I have no ulterior motive to let a new sect of "Englightened ones" loose upon Europe. But he who believes in science cannot allow it to leave one path of research unexplored through ignorance, indifference, contempt or prejudice.

Abstract Personality called God, of a Moral Law, or, of an Abstract Essence underlying every existence." [100]

And in this last form, which is that of Vedantic Advaitism, we find ourselves so close to the aim of pure Science that they can hardly be distinguished. The main difference is in the gesture with which the runners arrive at the tape:—Science accepts and envisages Unity as the hypothetical term for its stages of thought, giving them their right bearings and co-ordinating them. Yoga embraces Unity and becomes encrusted in it as in ivy. But the spiritual results are practically the same. Modern science and the philosophic Advaita conclude that "the explanations of things are in their own nature, and that no external beings or existences are required to explain what is going on in the universe." And the corollary of this same principle, that "everything comes from within," is "the modern law of Evolution. The whole meaning of evolution is simply that the nature of the things is reproduced (in its growth), that the effect is nothing but the cause in another form, that all the potentialities of the effect were present in the cause, that the whole of creation is but an evolution and not a creation." [101]

Vivekananda frequently insists on the close relationship between the modern theory of evolution and the theories of ancient metaphysics and Vedantic cosmogony.[102] But there is this fundamental distinction between the evolutionary hypothesis and the Hindu hypothesis, that the first is as compared to the second only one wing of the whole building, and that Evolution has as counterpart (or buttress) in Vedantism the same periodic Involution that it possess itself. All Hindu theory is in its very nature founded on the theory of Cycles. Progression presents itself in the form of successive sets of waves. Each wave rises and falls; and each wave is followed by another wave which in its turn rises and falls:

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[100] *Jnana-yoga,* The Necessity of Religion.

[101] *Complete Works,* I, p. 374.

[102] In his lecture on the Vedanta: "Replies to Questions," he tried to establish a rapprochement between Evolutionism and the ancient theory of the Creation, or, more precisely, the "projection" of the universe by the action of Prana (primordial Force) on Akasha (primordial Matter) beyond which is Manat, or the Cosmic Spirit, in which they can both be speaking of the change of one kind of being into another kind of being "by the filling up of nature."

"Even on the grounds of modern research, man cannot be simply an evolution. Every evolution presupposes an involution. The modern scientific man will tell you that you can only get the amount of energy out of a machine that you have put into it. Something cannot be produced out of nothing. If a man is an evolution of the mollusc, then the perfect man, the Buddha-man, the Christ-man was involved in the mollusc. . . . Thus we are in the position of reconciling the scriptures with modern light. That energy, which manifests itself slowly through various stages until it becomes the perfect man, cannot come out of nothing. It existed somewhere; and if . . . the protoplasm is the first point to which you can trace it, that protoplasm must have contained the energy.[103] Discussions are futile between "those who claim that the aggregate of materials we call the body is the cause of the manifestation of the force we call the soul," and those who make the soul the cause of the body. They explain nothing. "Where did the force come from which is the source of these combinations we call the soul or the body? . . . It is more logical to say that the force which takes up the matter and forms the body is the same which manifests through that body. . . . It is possible to demonstrate that what we call matter does not exist at all. It is only a certain state of force. What is the force which manifests itself through the body? . . . In old times in all the ancient scriptures, this power, this manifestation of power, was thought to be of a bright substance, having the form of this body, and which remained even after this body fell. Later on, however, we find a higher idea coming—that this bright body did not represent the force. Whatever has form . . . requires something else. . . . So, that something was called the soul, the Atman, in Sanskrit. . . . One omnipresent, the Infinite." [104]

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[103] In one of his lectures on Jnana-yoga (Realisation, October 29, 1896) Vivekananda gave to this conception of Evolution-Involution a striking, terrifying form, akin to that of wells: that of *contrary Evolution*: "If we are developed from animals, the animals also may be degraded men. Now do you know that it is not so? . . . You find a series of bodies, rising in a gradually ascending scale. But from that how can you insist that it is always from the lower upwards, and never from the higher downwards? . . . I believe that the series is repeating itself in going up and down." Certain words of Goethe give colour to the new

But how did the Infinite become finite? The great metaphysical problem [105] wherein the genius of the centuries has been spent in tirelessly building up again its crumbling scaffoldings. For to suppose, the Infinite to prove it and touch it is only a beginning. It must be united to that which by its own definition is fated never

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thought that these lines would have found echoes within him, of which he was aware but which he repulsed with anger and horror.

[104] *Jnana-yoga:* II. The Real Nature of Man (Lecture delivered in London).

[105] And the mathematical as well (Cf. H. Poincaré: *Dernières Pensées.*)

to attain to it. Christian metaphysicians [106] in this direction have brought to the task an architectural genius of intelligence, order and harmony, akin to that of their compeers, the master builders of our cathedrals; and their magnificent constructions seem to me as superior in beauty (there can be no certain standard on this point) to Hindu metaphysical creations as Chartres or Amiens to a European compared to Madura, with it mountains of sculptured stone piled into pinnacles like white-ant heaps. But there can be no question of higher or lower rank between two fruits of nature equally gigantic, and corresponding to the laws of expression natural to two different mental climates.

The reply of India is that of the Hindu Sphinx:—Maya. It was by transmitting the laws of the spirit through the screen of Maya that "the Infinite" became "finite." Maya, her screen, her laws, and the spirit are the product of a sort of "Degeneracy of the Absolute," diluted into "phenomena." Will is situated one stage higher, although Vivekananda does not accord it the place of honour given to it by Schopenhauer.[107] He places it at the threshold of the Absolute: it guards the door. It is both its first manifestation and its first limitation. It is a composite of the real Self, beyond causality, and the minds that dwell on this side. Now, no composite is permanent. The will to live implies the necessity of death. The words "Immortal Life" are then a contradiction in terms. The real eternal being is beyond life and death.

[106] Here again this great art with its Gothic vaulting spanning the Infinite and the finite would seem to have been inherited from Alexandria and the East, through Plotinus and Denis the Areopagite.

[107] He quotes him and contradicts him in his lecture on *Maya*: IV, *The Absolute and Manifestation.*

But how has this absolute Being become mingled with the will, the spirit, the relative? Vivekananda replies from the Vedanta:—"It has never been mingled. You are this absolute Being, you have never changed. All that changes is Maya, the Screen held between the real Me and you." And the very object of Life, of individual life, of the life of generations, of all human Evolution, of the unceasing ascension of Nature from the lowest order where dawns existence—is the gradual elimination of the Screen. The very first illumination of the mind makes a tiny hole through which the glance of the Absolute filters. As the mind grows, the hole grows larger, so that, although it is not true to say that what is seen through it tomorrow is truer or more real than what is seen today, (it is all equally real) each day a wider surface is covered until the whole Screen is lost, and nothing remains but the Absolute.[108]

"Calmed are the clamours of the urgent flesh;
The tumult of the boastful mind is hushed;
Cords of the heart are loosened and set free;
Unfastened are the bondages that bind;
Attachment and delusion are no more!
Aye! There sounds the Sound
Void of vibration. Verily! Thy Voice![109]

At that evocation the spirit rises up. . . .

"People are frightened when they are told this." This immense ONE will submerge them. "They will again and again ask you if they are not going to keep their individuality.

What is individuality? I should like to see it."

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[108] Introduction to Jnana-yoga, Vol. V of *Complete Works,* p. 39 *et seq.*

[109] Lines from the Bengali poem of Vivekananda: *A Song I Sing to Thee. Complete Works,* Vol. IV, 444.

Everything is in a state of flux, everything changes. . . . "There is no more individuality" except at the end of the way. "We are not yet individuals. We are struggling towards individuality: and that is the Infinite, our real nature.[110] He alone lives whose life is the whole universe, and the more we concentrate our lives on limited things the faster we go towards death. Those moments alone we live, when our lives are in the universe, in others; and living in this little life is death, simply death, and that is why the fear of death comes. The fear of death can only be conquered, when man realises that so long as there is one life in this universe, he is living. . . . The apparent man is merely a struggle to express, to manifest, this individuality, which is beyond. . . ."

And this struggle is accomplished by the evolution of nature leading step by step to the manifestation of the Absolute.[111]

But an important corrective must be added to the doctrine of Evolution. Vivekananda takes it from

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[110] The same affirmation that Christian Mysticism makes, when it reassures those who tremble at the idea of their "inexistent" individuality being swamped. In his beautiful classical style, the Dominican Chardon writes:

"Divine Love transforms the creature into God in such a way that it is engulfed in Deified being, in the depths of Divine perfection; nevertheless the creature being does not there cast off its being, but rather loses its non-being, and, like a drop of water mingling with the sea wherein it is engulfed, it loses the fear of becoming less. . . . It takes on divine being in the being of God in whose abyss it is submerged . . . like a sponge soaked and filled with water to its full capacity, floating on the bosom of a sea, whose very dimension, height, depth, length and breadth, are infinite. . . ."

(*La Croix de Jésus,* 1647. Cf. Brémond: *Metaphysique des Saints,* II, 46-47.)

[111] *Jnana-yoga:* II. The Real Nature of Man.

Patanjali: theory on "The Filling in of Nature." [112] Patanjali maintained that the struggle for life, the struggle for existence and natural selection have only their full and rigorous application in the inferior orders of nature, where they play the determining part in the evolution of species. But at the next stage, which is the human order, struggle and competition are a retrogression rather than a contribution to progress. For, according to pure Vedantic doctrine, the aim of all progress, its absolute fulfilment, being the real nature inherent in man, nothing but certain obstacles can prevent him from reaching it. If he can successfully avoid them, his highest nature will manifest itself immediately. And this triumph of man can be attained by education, by self-culture, by meditation and concentration, above all by renunciation and sacrifice. The greatest sages, the sons of God, are those who have attained. Hence Hindu doctrine, although it respects the general law of scientific Evolution, offers to the human spirit the possibility of escape from the slow ascent of thousands of years, by means of rushing great wings sweeping it up to the summit of the staircase.[113]

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[112] It was in the course of discussions on Darwinism that Vivekananda expressed these ideas at Calcutta towards the end of '98. (*Life of Swami Vivekananda,* Chapter 112.)

[113] The evening of the day on which Vivekananda had made this statement, to the superintendent of the Zoological Gardens at Calcutta, who was much struck by it, he took up the discussion again at the house of Balaram, before a group of friends. He was asked whether it was true that Darwinism applied to the vegetable and animal orders and not to the human, and if so why during his campaigns of oratory he insisted so much on the primordial necessity of bettering the material conditions of life for the Indians. He then had one of his outbreaks of passionate anger and cried: "Are you men? You are no better than animals, satisfied with eating, sleeping and propagating, and haunted by fear! If you had not had in you a little rationality

And so it matters little whether or not we discuss the philosophic probability of the whole system, and the strange hypothesis of Maya on which it rests,—this explanation is undoubtedly fascinating and corresponds to certain hallucinated instincts of universal sensibility, but it demands an explanation in its turn; and no one has made it; no one has been able to make it; each person comes back in the last resort to this argument:—"I feel that it is so. Do you not feel the same?"[114] Yes.

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you would have been turned into quadrupeds by this time! Devoid of self-respect, you are full of jealousy among yourselves, and have made yourselves objects of contempt to the foreigners! Throw aside your vain bragging, your theories and so forth, and reflect calmly on the doings and dealings of your everyday life. Because you are governed by animal nature, therefore I teach you to seek for success first in the struggle for existence, and to attend to the building up of your physique, so that you shall be able to wrestle all the better with your mind. The physically weak, I say again and again, are unfit for the realisation of the Self! When once the mind is controlled and man is the master of his self, it does not matter whether the body remains strong or not, for then he is not dominated by it . . ."

Here once again it is clear that whatever criticisms may be levelled at Vivekananda's mysticism, lack of virility can never be one of them.

[114] Here is the kernel: the "experience" of the Infinite and Illusion. The rest is only the outer shell. The science of religion has taken a wrong turning if it confines itself to the comparative study of ideas and rites. Why does the influence of ideas and religious systems spread from one human group to the other? Because they depend on certain personal experiences. For instance the likenesses between the doctrines of Philo, Plotinus and the first Christians may be examined. But this fact is not emphasised, that Philo, Plotinus and the first Christians realised similar "Illuminations." Now, the chief point of interest is that these religious "experiences" often took place, under the same forms in the case of men of different race and time. How is it possible to estimate the value of such experiences? Perhaps by a new science of the mind, armed with a more supple and finer instrument of analysis than the incomplete rough methods of the psycho-analist and his fashionable descendants. Certainly not

I do. I have often perceived with flaming clarity the unreality of this apparent world, the spider's web bathed in sunlight where, Ariel fashion, Liluli balances herself,[115] "Lila" the player, Maya, the laughing one—I have seen the screen! And for a long time I have seen through it—ever since as a child, with beating heart, I surreptitiously made the hole of light bigger with my fingers. But I have no intention of adducing that as a proof. It is a vision. And I should have to lend my eyes to others before I could communicate it to them. Maya or Nature (the name does not matter) has given each man his own eyes. And they all belong to Maya, whether we say mine, thine or yours, and all are clothed with the rays of our Lady of Illusion. I am no longer sufficiently interested in myself to attribute to myself any special privileges. I love your eyes and what they see just as much as I love my own. Let them remain as free as mine!

It therefore follows, my European friends, that I am not trying to prove to you the truth of a system, which, like all others, being human, is only hypothesis. But what I hope I have shown you is the loftiness of the hypothesis, and that, whatever it may be worth as a metaphysical explanation of the universe, in the realm of fact it is not contrary to the most recent findings of modern Western science.

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by the dialectic of ideas. The systems constructed by Plotinus or Denis have a value as intellectual architecture, which is open to dispute; but this architecture always goes back ultimately to the perception of the Infinite and to the efforts of reason to build a fitting temple for it. Rational criticism only reaches the superstructure of the church. It leaves the foundations and the crypt intact.

[115] Allusion to an Aristophanesque Comedy by Romain Rolland: *Liluli,* which symbolises "Illusion."

III

SCIENCE, THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

In truth, religion, as Vivekananda understood it, had such vast wings that when it was at rest it could brood over all the eggs of the liberated Spirit. He repudiated nothing that was contained in all loyal and sane forms of Knowledge. To him religion was the fellow citizen of every thinking man, and its only enemy was intolerance.

"All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion must be given up. . . . The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and, at the same time, have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be kept open for future additions to the already existing store. Religions (and sciences are included under this name) must also be inclusive, and not look down with contempt upon one another, because their particular ideals of God are different. In my life, I have seen a great many spiritual men, a great many sensible persons, who did not believe in God at all, that is to say, not in our sense of the word. Perhaps they understood God better than we can ever do. The Personal idea of God or the Impersonal, the Infinite, Moral Law or the Ideal Man—these all have come under the definition of religion. . . ."[1]

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[1] *The Necessity of Religion.*

"Religion" for Vivekananda, is synonymous with "Universalism" of the spirit. And it is not until "religious" conceptions have attained to this universalism, that religion is realised in its fullness. For, contrary to the belief of all who know it not, religion is a matter for the future far more than for the past. It has only just begun.

. . . "It is said sometimes that religions are dying out, that spiritual ideas are dying out of the world. To me it seems that they have just begun to grow. . . . So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms and rituals. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then, and then alone religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before." [2]

The task awaiting us today is to join the hands of the two brothers, who are now at law with each other over a field, the perfect exploitation of which needs their united efforts—religion and science. It is a matter of urgent necessity to re-establish "a fellow-feeling between the different types of religion . . . and between types of religious expression coming from the study of mental phenomena,—unfortunately even now laying exclusive claim to the name of religion—and those expressions of religion whose heads . . . are penetrating more into the secrets of heaven . . . the so-called materialistic sciences." [3]

It is hopeless to attempt to turn one brother out for the benefit of the other. You can dispense neither with science nor religion.

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[2] *ibid.*

[3] *ibid.*

"Materialism prevails in Europe today. You may pray for the salvation of the modern sceptics, but they do not yield, they want reason." [4]

What then is the solution? To find *a modus vivendi* between the two. Human history made that discovery long ago; but forgetful man lets his most precious discoveries fall into oblivion and then has to find them again at great cost.

"The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion."

And such a religion exists; it is the Advaita of India,[5] Non-Dualism, Unity, the idea of the Absolute, of the impersonal God: [5] "the only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people."

"The Advaita has twice saved India from materialism. By the coming of Buddha, who appeared in a time of most hideous and wide-spread materialism. . . . By the coming of Sankara, who when materialism had reconquered India in the form of the demoralisation of the governing classes and of superstition in the lower orders, put fresh life into Vedanta, by making a rational philosophy emerge from it." We want today that bright sun of intellectuality, joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful, infinite heart of love and mercy. This union will give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out we may be sure that it will be for all times and all peoples. This is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science, for it has almost come to it. When the scientific teacher asserts that all things are the manifestations of one force, does it not remind you of the God of whom you hear in the Upanishads:

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[4] *The Absolute and Manifestation,* Vol. II of *Complete Works,* p. 130.

[5] Vivekananda merely made the mistake common to most Indians of thinking that the Advaita was the sole possession of India. The Absolute is the keystone of the great arch of Christian metaphysics, as well as of certain of the highest philosophies of the ancient world. It is to be hoped that India will study these other expressions of the Divine Absolute at first hand and so enrich her own conception.

"AS THE ONE FIRE ENTERING INTO THE UNIVERSE EXPRESSES ITSELF IN VARIOUS FORMS EVEN SO THAT ONE SOUL IS EXPRESSING ITSELF IN EVERY SOUL AND YET IS INFINITELY MORE BESIDES."[6]

The Advaita must be superadded to science without yielding anything to the latter, but at the same time without demanding that science should alter its teachings. Let us recall once again their common principles:

"The first principle of reasoning is that the particular is explained by the general—until we come to the universal. A second explanation of knowledge is that the explanation of a thing must come from inside and not from outside. . . . The Advaita satisfies these two principles,"[7] and pursues their application into its own chosen field. "It pushes it to the ultimate generalisation," and claims to attain to Unity, not only in its radiation and its effects, rationally deducted from experiments, but in itself, in its own source. It is for you to control its observations! It does not avoid control, rather it seeks for it. For it does not belong to those religious camps who entrench themselves behind the mystery of their revelations. Its doors and windows are wide open to all. Come and see! It is possible that it is mistaken—so may you be, so may we all. But whether it is mistaken or not, it works with us to build the same house on the same foundations.

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[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. II of the *Complete Works*, p. 140.

[7] *Reason and Religion*, Vol. VI of the *Complete Works*, p. 368.

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At bottom, in spite of the fact that its Mission is to unite, the stumbling block to mutual understanding, the chief obstacle to the coincidence of mankind is the word GOD, for that world embraces every possible ambiguity of thought, and is used oppressively to bandage the clear eyes of Freedom. Vivekananda was fully aware of this fact:

". . . I have been asked many times, 'Why do you use that old word, God?' Because it is the best word for our purpose.[8] . . . because all the hopes, aspirations and happiness of humanity have been centred in that word. It is impossible now to change the word. Words like these were first coined by great saints, who realised their import and understood their meaning. But as they become current in society, ignorant people take these words, and the result is they lose their spirit and glory. The word God has been used from time immemorial, and the idea of this cosmic intelligence, and all that is great and holy is associated with it." If we reject it each man will offer a different word, and the result will be a confusion of tongues, a new tower of Babel. "Use the old word, only use it in the true spirit, cleanse it of superstition, and realise fully what this great ancient word means. . . . You will know that these words are associated with innumerable majestic and powerful ideas; they have been used and worshipped by millions of human souls and associated by them with all that is highest and best, all that is rational, all that is lovable, all that is great and grand in human nature. . . ."

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[8] At the end of this chapter will be found the final definition of his "purpose" by Vivekananda.

Vivekananda specifies for us that "it is the sum total of intelligence manifested in the universe," concentrated in its own centre. It is "the universal intelligence." And "all the various forms of cosmic energy, such as matter, thought, force, intelligence and so forth are simply the manifestation of that cosmic intelligence." [9]

This "Cosmic intelligence" is tacitly implied in scientific reasoning. The chief difference is that in the case of Science it remains a piece of mechanism, while a Vivekananda breathes life into it; Pygmalion's statue comes alive. Even if the learned man can accuse the religious of an induction not scientifically proved, the induction itself is not necessarily anti-scientific. For it is as easy to say that Pygmalion modelled the statue as that Pygmalion was modelled by it. In any case they both came out of the same workshop: it would be surprising indeed if life was only to be found in the one while the other was an automaton. Human intelligence implies universal intelligence (to a higher degree than it can either deny or prove). And the reasoning of a religious and learned man like Vivekananda does not seem to me very different in scientific quality from that "Logic of the Infinite" propounded by Henri

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[9] *Jnana-yoga:* The Cosmos, I. Macrocosm. (New York, January 19, 1896).

Poincaré which, while it admits part of science takes up the cudgels against the Cantorians.

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But it is a matter of indifference to the calm pride of the man, who deems himself to be the stronger, whether Science accepts religion, in Vivekananda's sense of the term or not: for his Religion is prepared to accept Science. It is vast enough to find a place at its table for all loyal seekers after truth. It has its dreams of Empire, but it respects the liberties of all, provided that there is mutual respect. One of Vivekananda's most beautiful visions, the one to which he devotes the final Essays of his Jnana-yoga, is his invocation to a "Universal Religion." [10]

Now that the reader has learnt so much about him, he will not apprehend any Taylorism of thought, that seeks to impose its own colour upon the rainbow of the world, not even if it is a perfect white, the only colour that could claim to replace the others, since it contains them all. Vivekananda could not have too many spiritual modes for the music of Brahman. Uniformity for him spelt death. He rejoiced in the immense diversity of religions and ideas. Let them ever grow and multiply! . . .

"I have no desire to live on an earth like a tomb. I wish to be a man in a world of men. . . . Variation is a sign of life. . . . Difference is the first index of thought. . . . I pray that she may multiply until there are as many forms of thought as there are human beings. . . . Whirlpools and eddies are only produced by a living torrent. . . . It is the force of thought that awakes thought. . . . Let each have his own path of thought in religion. . . . And in fact this is what does happen. Each of us thinks after his own fashion. But the natural course has always been obstructed. . . ."

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[10] I. *The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion;* II. *The Ideal of a Universal Religion.* (Lectures given in Pasadena, California, January, 1900.)

And so unsilt the souls of men! Open again the "Bysses,"[11] as my neighbours of Valais say, when they release the running water to irrigate their fields. But it is different from the thirsty Valais which has to economise water and pass the pitcher from hand to hand, turn and turn about. . . . The water of the soul is never scarce. It flows on all sides. In every religion in the world a mighty reservoir of life is contained and accumulated, however much those who deny it in the name of the lay religion of reason may be self-deceived. No single great religion, throughout the course of twenty centuries said Vivekananda has died, with the possible exception of Zoroastrianism. (And was he sure of this? He was certainly mistaken on this point.)[12]

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[11] This is a system of irrigation used by the Swiss peasants in the mountains. The water is released at fixed times over the fields by each peasant in turn.

[12] Within the last few months a very interesting study by Dr. J. G. S. Taraporewala has appeared in the beautiful Review published by Rabindranath Tagore's University at Shantiniketan, *Visva Bharati,* January, 1929, which vindicates "The position of Iran in Asiatic culture," and traces the evolution of Zoroastrianism and the schools founded upon it not only in the East but in the West. It would appear that in the first century B.C. several currents flowed from their source in Asia Minor where the cult of Ahura-Mazda was preserved. From one of them in the age of Pompey sprang the cult of Mithra, which almost conquered the West. The other, passing through the South West of Arabia and Egypt, influenced the beginnings of the Gnostic school, whose capital importance for Christian metaphysics is well known; and this same current gave

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism, Christianity, continue to grow in numbers and quality. (And the religion of science, of liberty and of human solidarity is also growing.) What is growing less in mankind is the death of the spirit, absolute darkness, negation of thought, absence of light: the very feeblest ray is faith, although it is unaware of itself. Each great system of faith, whether "religious" or "lay" "represents one portion of Universal Truth and spends its force in converting that into a type." Each, therefore, should unite with the others, instead of being mutually exclusive. But petty individual vanities due mainly to ignorance, upheld by the pride and interest of priestly castes, have always in all countries and all ages, made the part claim to be the whole. "A man goes out into the world, God's menagerie, with a little cage in his hand," and thinks he can shut everything inside it. What old children they are! Let them chatter and mock at each other. Despite their foolishness, each group has a living, beating heart, its own mission, and its own note in the complete harmony of sound; each one has conceived its own splendid but incomplete ideal: Christianity its dream of moral purity; Hinduism, spirituality; Islamism, social equality . . . etc.[13] And each group is divided into families each with a different temperament: rationalism, Puritanism, scepticism, worship of the

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birth in Arabia to a school of mystics, known to Mahomet; Musulman sufis have their origin in this mixture of Zoroastrianism and Islam. Hence the vital energy possessed by these religious germs, which seemed to have been stamped out and to have disappeared, becomes apparent.

[13] It goes without saying that here he has emphasised only one characteristic aspect of much more vast and complex structures of thought. The responsibility for this simplification is Vivekananda's.

senses or of the mind. . . . They are all of diverse and graded powers in the divine economy of the Being, as it ceaselessly advances. Vivekananda uttered this profound saying, one we should do well to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest":

"Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from a lesser to a higher."

If we have understood him properly, our watchword should be: "Acceptance," and not exclusion—"not even toleration, which is an insult and a blasphemy;" for each man grasps what he can of Truth. You have no right to "tolerate" him, any more than he has the right to tolerate you or me. We all have equal rights, and equal shares in truth. We are fellow workers; let us fraternise.

"I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them. . . . Is God's book finished? or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book, —these Spiritual Revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. . . . We stand in the present but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!" [14]

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[14] *The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion.*

These ideas were the same as Ramakrishna's, and also of Keshab Chunder Sen, who played the part of forerunners. About 1866 in his Lecture on *Great Men*, Keshab said:

"Hindu brethren, as ye honour your prophets, honour ye like-

These ideas of universalism and spiritual brotherhood are in the air today. But each man, consciously or unconsciously, seeks to turn them to his own profit. Vivekananda had no need to live in the age of the memorable "War of Right and Liberty," to denounce and expose the exploitation of idealism, and the colossal Hypocrisy, which has culminated in this modern age in Geneva, Paris, London, Berlin, Washington, and their satellites, either allied or enemy. "Patriotism," he said, "is a phase of a profession of quasi-religious faith." But it is too often a mask for selfishness. "Love, Peace, Brotherhood, etc., have become mere word to us . . . Each one cries: Universal Brotherhood! We are all equal! . . ." And then immediately afterwards:—"Let us form a sect!" The need for exclusivism reappears at a gallop with a badly concealed fanatical

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wise the illustrious reformers and great men of Christendom. . . . To you, my Christian brethren, also, I humbly say—As ye honour your prophets, honour ye likewise the prophets of the East."

"One religion shall be acknowledged by all men, . . . yet each nation shall have its own peculiar and free mode of action . . . so shall the various races and tribes and nations of the world, with their own peculiar voice and music, sing His glory; but all their different voices and modes of chanting shall commingle in one sweet and swelling chorus—one universal anthem."

This was the *leit motif* of all his lectures in England (1870): to embrace in one communion all nations and races, and so to found a Universal Religion—for each religion to share the one with the others whatever it possessed of good, so that in time the future Church of the world might be built.

Finally in the *Epistle to my Indian Brethren* (1880), these words occur, which might have come from Vivekananda, or from the soul of Ramakrishna:

"Let your word of command be the infinite progression of the spirit! . . . Let your faith be all embracing, not exclusive! Let your love be universal charity! . . . Do not form a new sect. But accept all sects. Harmonise all beliefs. . . ."

passion, which makes secret appeal to all the wickedness in man: "It is a disease."[16]

Do not then be deceived by words! "The world is too full of blustering talk." Men who really feel the brotherhood of man do not talk much about it; they do not make speeches to the "Society of Nations," they do not organise Leagues: they work and they live. Diversity of ritual, myths and doctrines (both clerical and lay) does not trouble them. They feel the thread passing through them all, linking the pearls into a necklace.[16] Like the rest, they go to draw water from the well, each with his own pitcher or receptacle whose form is taken by the water. But they do not quarrel about the form it takes. It is all the same water.[17]

By what practical means can silence and peace be secured among the brawling throng squabbling round the well? Let each one drink his own water and allow the rest to drink theirs! There is plenty for everybody. And it is stupid to want everyone to drink God out of the same pitcher. Vivekananda breaks in in the midst of the hubbub and tries to make the disputants listen to at least two maxims of conduct, two provisional rules:

The first: "Do not destroy!"—build, if you can help to build. But if you cannot, do not interfere! It is better to do nothing than to do ill. Never speak a word against any sincere conviction. If you have one,

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[15] For all the preceding and following portions cf. *"The Ideal of a Universal Religion."*

[16] "I am the thread that runs through all these different ideas, and each one is a pearl," said the Lord Krishna (quoted by Vivekananda in his lecture on *Maya and the Evolution of the Conception of God*).

[17] Vivekananda took this beautiful figure from his Master Ramakrishna, who clothed it in still more picturesque colour.

serve it, but without harming the servants of different convictions. If you have none, look on! Be content with the role of a spectator.

The second: "Take man as he stands, and from thence give him a lift" along his own road. You need not fear that that road will take you out of your way. God is the centre of all the radii, and each of us is converging towards Him along one of them. And so, as Tolstoy says, "we shall all meet again, when we have arrived." The differences disappear at the centre—but only at the centre; and variety is a necessity of nature: without it there would be no life. So, help her, but do not get it into your head that you can produce or even lead her! All that you can do is to put a protective hedge round the tender plant. Remove the obstacles to its growth and give it enough air and space so that it can develop; nothing else. Its growth must come from within. Abandon the idea that you can give spirituality to others.[18] Each man's master is his own soul. Each has to learn for himself. Each has to make himself. The only duty another can possess is to help him to do so.

This respect for human individuality and its freedom is admirable. No other religion has possessed it to this degree, and with Vivekananda it was part of the very essence of his religion. His God was no less than all living beings, and every living being ought therefore to be free to develop. One of the most ancient Upanishads says:

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[18] I think that it is necessary to add the following correction to this phrase—which corresponds to the intimate thought of Vivekananda.

"Spirituality is in everybody, but more or less latent, suppressed, or freely poured out. He who is a fountain of it is by his presence alone, by the very music of his gushing waters, a call, an awakener of hidden springs, which did not know of their own existence or were afraid to avow it. In this sense there is certainly a gift—a living communication of spirituality."

"Whatever exists in this universe, is to be covered with the Lord."

And Vivekananda explained this saying thus:

"We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything": in good and evil, in sin and in the sinner, in happiness and misery, in life and in death. "If you have a wife it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in your wife." He is in her, in you, in your child. He is everywhere.

Such a sentiment does not rob life of any of its riches; but it makes its riches and its miseries the same.

"Desire and evil itself have their uses. There is a glory in happiness, there is a glory in suffering. . . . As for me, I am glad I have done something good and many things bad; glad I have done something right, and glad I have committed many errors, because every one of them has been a great lesson. . . . Not that you should not have property, have all you want . . . only know the truth and realise it. . . . All belongs to the Lord, put God in your every movement. . . .The whole scene changes, and the world instead of appearing as one of woe and misery, will become a heaven."

This is the meaning of the great saying of Jesus. "The Kingdom of heaven is within you." Heaven is not beyond. It is here and now. Everything is heaven. You have only to open your eyes.[19]

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[19] The preceding belongs to the seventh lecture on *Jnana-yoga:* God in Everything. (London, October 27, 1896.)

"Awake, arise and dream no more! . . . .
Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are eternal Love and Service Free." [20]

"Each soul," he commented again,[21] is potentially divine. The good is to manifest this Divine within, by controlling nature external and internal. Do this, either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy,[22]—by one or more or all of these—and be free! This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples or forms are but secondary details."

And the great artist that he was at bottom [23] compared the universe to a picture, only to be enjoyed by the man who has devoured it with his eyes without any interested intention of buying or selling:

"I never read of any more beautiful conception of God than the following: 'He is the Great Poet, the Ancient Poet: the whole Universe is His poem, coming in verses and rhymes and rhythms, written in infinite bliss.' "[24]

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[20] This undated poem of Vivekananda, embraces in these five lines all the principal forms of yoga: the abstract Advaita, and in the last two verses the yoga of Bhakti and of Karma.

[21] Interviews, (*Complete Works,* Vol. IV).

[22] Hence by one of the four yogas, Karma, Bhakti, Raja, Jnana, or by all four.

[23] "Do you not see," he said to Miss MacLeod, "that I am first and foremost a poet?"—a word that may be misunderstood by Europeans; for they have lost the meaning of true poetry the flight of faith—without which a bird becomes a mere mechanical toy.

In London in 1895 he said "The artist is a witness of the beautiful. Art is the least selfish form of pleasure in the world."

And again: "If you cannot appreciate harmony in Nature, how can you appreciate God, who is the sum of all harmony?"

And finally: "Of a truth, Art is Brahman."

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But it is to be feared that such a conception will seem too aesthetic and inaccessible except to those artistic spirits who are produced with less parsimony by the torrents of Shiva watering the races of Bengal than by our pale smoke-begrimed sun. And there is another danger—its direct opposite—that races accessible to this ideal of escstatic enjoyment will remain inactive spectators of it, enervated and enslaved by the *"Summus Artifex"*[25] in the same way that the Roman Emperor enervated and enslaved his subjects by the games. . . . *"Circenses."*

Those who have followed me up to this point know enough of Vivekananda's nature with its tragic compassion that knitted him to all the sufferings of the universe, and the fury of action wherewith he flung himself to the rescue, to be certain that he would never permit nor tolerate in others any assumption of the right to lose themselves in an ecstasy of art or contemplation.

And because he knew in his own case and in that of his companions the dangerous attraction of this sovereign Game,[26] he constantly forbade it to those who were dependent on his guidance, and he constantly sought in his preaching to turn their dreaming regard to what he called a "practical Vedanta." [27]

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[24] *God in Everything.*

[25] It will be remembered that Nero so styled himself: "The Supreme Artist"—and that the people of Rome submitted to all his tyrannies provided he gave them *"panem et circenses"* (bread and circuses).

[26] "Lila", the *Game* of God.

"You know," he said to Sister Nivedita, "we have a theory that the universe, is God's manifestation of Himself just for fun, that the Incarnations came and lived here 'just for fun'! Play—

With him it was true that "the knowledge of Brah-

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it was all play. Why was Christ crucified? It was mere play . . . Just play with the Lord. Say: 'it (life) is all play, it is all play.'"

And this profound and terrible doctrine is at the bottom of the thought of all great Hindus—as of many mystics of all ages and all climes. Is not the same idea to be found in Plotinus, who visualised this life as a theatre, where "the actor continually changes his costume," where the crumbling of empires and civilisations "are changes of scene or personages, the cries and tears of the actors. . . ."

But in what concerns Vivekananda and his thought, the time and place of his teaching, must never be forgotten. Often he wished to create a reaction against a tendency that he considered diseased in his auditors, and he used excess against excess, but for him harmony was the final truth.

On this occasion he was rather embarrassed by the emotionalism of the excellent Nivedita, who was saying goodbye to him in too sentimental a way. He said to her, "Why not part with a smile? You worship sorrow . . ." And in order to rebuke his English friend, who took everything too seriously, he showed her the doctrine of the Game.

His antipathy to morose devotion, to the spirit of self-crucifying grief, was explained in the curious apologue of Narada:

There are great Yogis among the Gods. Narada was one. One day he was passing through a forest and saw a man who had been meditating until the white ants had built a large mound round him; Further on he saw another man jumping about for joy under a tree. They asked Narada, who had gone to heaven, when they would be judged worthy to attain freedom. To the man surrounded by the ant heap Narada said, "After four more births" and the man wept. To the dancer, he said, "After as many births as there are leaves on that tree." And for joy that deliverance was coming so soon, the dancer went on jumping for joy . . . Immediately he was free. Cf. the conclusion of *Raja-yoga.*

[27] The title given to two lectures in *Jnana-yoga* (London, November 10 and 12, 1896) (Cf. also his lectures in the same collection: *The Real and the Apparent Man, Realisation, God in Everything,* and the Conversations and Dialogues with Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, 1898, Belur), Vol. VII of *Complete Works,* p. 105 *et seq.*

man is the ultimate purpose, the highest destiny of man. But man cannot remain absorbed in Brahman."[28] Such absorption is only for exceptional moments. "When he emerges from that Ocean of rest and without a name," he must go back to his buoy. And it is less the egoism of *"carpe diem"*[29] than that of: *"Memento quia pulvis es,"* and considerations of safety that keep him afloat in the water.

"If a man plunges headlong into foolish luxuries of the world without knowing the truth, he has missed his footing. . . . And if a man curses the world, goes out into a forest, mortifies his flesh, and kills himself little by little by starvation, makes his heart a barren waste, kills out feeling, and becomes harsh, stern and dried up, that man also has missed the way."[30]

The great motto we must take back into the world from the illuminations, that have revealed to us for an instant the Ocean of Being in the full and Bibical sense—the word that sooner or later will allow us to attain our End—is also the motto of the highest code of ethics:

"Not me, but thou!"

This "Me" is the product of the hidden Infinite in its process of exterior manifestation. We have to remake the path the inverse way towards our original state of infinitude. And each time that we say, "Not me, my brother, but thou!" we take one step forward.[31]

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[28] Interviews on the way of Mukti, Vol. VII of the *Complete Works,* p. 193 *et seq.*

[29] The meaning of these two phrases is well known: "Enjoy the day," is the Epicurian. The second, "Remember you are but dust," is the Christian.

[30] *God in Everything.*

[31] "Religious realisation does all the good to the world. People are afraid that when they attain to it, when they realise that there is but One, the fountains of love will be dried up, that everything in life will go away, and that all they love will vanish for

"But," says the selfish disciple to whose objections Vivekananda on that day replied with the patience of an angel—(a thing contrary to his habit) "but if I must always think of others when shall I contemplate the Atman? If I am always occupied with something particular and relative, how can I realise the Absolute?"

"My son," replied the Swami sweetly, "I have told you that by thinking intensely of the good of others, by devoting yourself to their service, you will purify your heart by that work and through it you will arrive at the vision of Self which penetrates all living beings. Then what more will you have to attain to? Would you rather that Realisation of Self consisted in existing in an inert way like a wall or a piece of wood?"[32]

"But," insisted the disciple, "all the same, that which the Scriptures describe as the Act of Self withdrawal into its real nature, consists in the stopping of all the functions of the spirit and all work."

"Oh!" said Vivekananda, "that is a very rare condition and difficult to attain and does not last long.

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them. . . . People never stop to think that those who bestowed the least thought on their own individualities have been the greatest workers in the world. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not any low, little or mortal thing. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but the veritable God Himself. The husband will love the wife . . . that mother will love the children more who thinks that the children are God Himself . . . That man will love his greatest enemy . . . Such a man becomes a world-mover for whom his little self is dead and God stands in his place . . . If one millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, 'You are all God, O ye men and O ye animals, and living beings, you are all manifestations of the one living Deity!' the whole world will be changed in half an hour." *(The Real and the Apparent Man.)*

[32] I have condensed the conversation.

How then will you spend the rest of the time? That is why having realised this state, the saint sees the Self in all beings, and possessed of this knowledge he devoted himself to their service, so that thus he uses up all the Karma (work) that remains to be expended by the body. That is the condition that the Shastras describe as Javin Mukti (Freedom in Life)."[33]

An old Persian tale describes in an exquisite form this state of bliss wherein a man, already free through knowledge, gives himself to others so naturally that he forgets everything else in them. A lover came to knock at the door of his well beloved. She asked, "Who is there?" He replied, "It is I." The door did not open. He came a second time, and called, "It is I, I am here!" The door remained closed. The third time the voice asked from within, "Who is there?" He replied, "Well-beloved, I am thou!" And this time the door opened.[34]

But this lovely parable, whose charm Vivekananda could appreciate more highly than most, represented too passive an ideal of love to contain the virile energy of a leader of the people. We have seen how constantly he flagellated and abused the greedy bliss of the Bhaktas. To love with him meant to love actively, to serve, to help. And the loved one was not to be chosen, but was to be the nearest whoever he happened to be, even the enemy in process of beating you, or the wicked or unfortunate—particularly such; for their need was greatest.[35]

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[33] Vol. VII of *Complete Works,* p. 105.

[34] Quoted by Vivekananda, second lecture on the *Practical Vedanta.*

[35] "Do you not remember what the Bible says: 'If you cannot love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen.' . . . I shall call you religious from

"My child, if you will only believe me," he said to a young man of middle class, who vainly sought peace of mind by shutting himself up in his house, "first of all you must begin by opening the door of your room, and looking about you. . . . There are some miserable people in the neighbourhood of your house. You will serve them with your best. One is ill; you will nurse him. Another is starving; you will feed him. A third is ignorant; you will teach him. If you wish peace of mind serve others! That is what I have to say!"[36]

We have insisted enough upon this aspect of his teaching and need not dwell upon it any further.

But there is another aspect that must never be forgotten. Usually in European thought "to serve" implies a feeling of voluntary debasement, of humility. It is the *"Dienen, dienen"* of Kundry in Parsifal. This sentiment is completely absent from the Vedantism of Vivekananda. To serve, to love, is to be the equal of the one served or loved. Far from abasement, Vivekananda always regarded it as the fullness of life. The words "Not me, but thou!" do not spell suicide, but the conquest of a vast empire. And if we see in our neighbour it is because we know that God is in us. Such is

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the day you begin to see God in men and women, and then you will understand what is meant by turning the left cheek to the man who strikes you on the right." (*Practical Vedanta,* II.)

This was the thought constantly expressed during the last years in Tolstoy's *Journal.*

[36] "The watchword of all well-being . . . is not I, but thou. Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is a soul or not, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an agnostic or a Vedantist, a Christian or a Mohammedan." (*Practical Vedanta,* IV, p. 350.)

the first teaching of the Vedanta. It does not say to us: "Prostrate yourselves!" It tells us: "Lift up your head! For each one of you carries God within him. Be worthy of Him! Be proud of it!" The Vedanta is the bread of the strong. And it says to the weak, "There are no weak. You are weak because you wish to be."[37] First have faith in yourselves. You yourselves are the proof of God![38] "Thou art That." Each of the pulsations of your blood sings it. "And the universe with its myriads of suns with one voice repeats the word: 'Thou art That.' "

Vivekananda proudly proclaims:

"He who does not believe in himself is an atheist."[39]

But he goes on to add,

"But it is not a selfish faith. . . . It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, for you are all one."[40]

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[37] "As soon as you say, 'I am a little mortal being,' you are saying something which is not true, you are giving the lie to yourselves, you are hypnotising yourselves into something vile and weak and wretched." (*Practical Vedanta,* I.)

Cf. the last Interviews with Sarachandra:

"Say to yourself: 'I am full of power, I am the happy Brahman!' . . . Brahman never awakes in those who have no self esteem."

[38] "How do you know that a book teaches truth? Because you are truth and feel it. . . . Your godhead is the proof of God Himself." (*Practical Vedanta,* I.)

[39] Boshi Sen quoted to me the brave words that go far to explain Vivekananda's religion—uttered in contradistinction to the Christian hypothesis that we should bear a human hell here to gain a Paradise hereafter.

"I do not believe in a God who will give me eternal bliss in heaven, and who cannot give me bread here."

This fearlessness in great Indian belief with regard to God must never be forgotten. The West, which chooses to represent the East as passive, is infinitely more so in its dealings with the Divinity. If, as an Indian Vedantist believes, God is in me, why should I accept the indignities of the world? It is rather my business to abolish them.

And this thought is the foundation of all ethics.

"Unity is the touchstone of truth. All that contributes to Unity is truth. Love is truth, and hate is not: for it works for multiplicity . . . it is a disintegrating force. . . ."

Love then goes in front.[41] But love, here, is the heart beat, the circulation of blood without which the members of the body would be paralysed. Love still implies the Force.

At the basis of everything then is Force, Divine Force. It is in all things and in all men. It is at the centre of the sphere, and at all the points of the circumference. And between the two each radius diffuses it. He who enters and plunges into the vestibule is thrown out in flames, but he who reaches the centre returns with hundredfold increased energy. He who realises it in contemplation, will then realise it in action.[42] The gods are part of it. For God is all in all. He who has seen God will live for all.[43]

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[40] *Practical Vedanta* I.

[41] Intellect here is relegated to the second place. "The intellect is necessary, but . . . is only the street cleaner; the policeman"; and the road will remain empty if the torrent of love does not pour down it. And then the Vedantist went on to quote the *Imitation of Christ*.

[42] Here again Christian mysticism arrives at the same results. Having achieved the fact of union with God the soul has never been freer to direct its other activities of life without violating any single one of them. One of the most perfect examples of this mastery is a Tourangelle of the XVIIth century, our St. Theresa of France, Madame Martin—Marie of the Incarnation—to whom the Abbé Brémond has devoted some of the most beautiful pages (half a volume) of his monumental *Histoire Littéraire du sentiment religieux en France,* Vol. IV, particularly chapter V: *"La Vie intense des Mystiques."* This great soul, who in a strictly Christian setting went through all the stages of mystic union like

Hence by a perpetual coming and going between the

Ramakrishna: sensibility, love, intelligence (up to the highest intellectual intuition), came down from them to practical action without for a single instant losing contact with the God she had realised. She said of herself:

"A divine intercourse was established between God and the soul by the most intimate union that can be imagined. . . . If the person has important occupations she will strive ceaselessly to cultivate what God was doing in her. That itself comforted her, because when the senses were occupied and diverted, the soul was free of them. . . . The third state of passive prayer is the most sublime. . . . The senses are then so free that the soul who has reached it can work without distraction in any employment required by its condition. . . . God shines at the depth of the soul . . ."

And her son, who was also a saint, Don Claude, wrote:

"As exterior occupations did not in the least interrupt interior union in her case, so inner union did not prevent her exterior functions. Martha and Mary were never in better accord in what they did, and the contemplation of the one did not put any hindrance in the way of the action of the other. . . ."

I cannot too strongly urge my Indian friends—(and those of my European friends who are usually ignorant of these riches) to make a careful study of these admirable texts. I do not believe that so perfect a genius of psychological analysis has been allied in any mysticism to the vigour of profound intuition as in the life of this bourgeoise from the valley of the Loire in the time of Louis XIII.

[43] So said the present great Abbot of the Math of Belur, Shivananda, in his presidential address to the first Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (April 1, 1926):

"If the highest illumination aims at nothing short of effacing all the distinctions between the individual soul and the universal soul, and if its ideal be to establish a total identity of one's own self with Brahman existing everywhere, then it naturally follows that the highest spiritual experience of the aspirant cannot but lead him to a state of exalted self-dedication to the welfare of all. He makes the last divine sacrifice by embracing the universe after transcending its limitations, which are the outcome of ignorance."

infinite Self of perfect Knowledge and the Ego implied in the Game of Maya, we maintain the union of all the forces of life. In the bosom of contemplation we receive the necessary energy for love and work, for faith and joy in action, for the framework of our days. But each deed is transposed into the key of Eternity. At the heart of intense action reigns eternal calm,[44] and the Spirit at the same time partakes of the struggles of life, and yet floats above the strife. Sovereign equilibrium has been realised, the ideal of the Gita and of Heraclitus.

> "Σχ τῶν δισερόγτων χαλλίατην ἁρμογιαν. . . ."[45]

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[44] Cf. the Gita, which here is the inspiration of the *Practical Vedanta,* I.

[45] That is to say "from discords (weave) the most beautiful harmony."

IV

CIVITAS DEI—THE CITY OF MANKIND

VIVEKANANDA'S constructive genius may be summed up in the two words, equilibrium and synthesis. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and had made each one his own. As in a quadriga he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and travelled along them all simultaneously towards Unity.[1] He was the personification of the harmony of all human Energy.

But the formula could not have been discovered by the brilliant intellect of the "Discriminator," if his own eyes had not seen its realisation in the harmonious personality of Ramakrishna. The angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonances of life into a Mozartian harmony, as rich and sweet as the Music of the Spheres. And hence the work and the thought of the great disciple was all carried out under the Sign of Ramakrishna.

"The time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderfully expansive infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony. . . . The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born . . . and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet. . . . He came, the living spirit of the Upanishads, the accomplishment of Indian sages, the sage for the present day . . . the harmony. . . ."[2]

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[1] It was precisely this faculty in him that struck Ramakrishna, and later Girish Ghose, who was to say of him to the disciples: "Your Swami is as much Jnanin and pandit as the lover of God and humanity." He realised the four forms of yoga, Love, Action, Knowledge and Energy, and maintained the balance among them.

Vivekananda wished to extend this harmony that had come to fruition in one privileged being and had been enjoyed by a few select souls, to the whole of India and the world. Therein lies his courage and originality. He may not have produced one single fresh idea; is there one of his ideas which did not spring from the womb of India—is there one which was not laid, as if it were an egg, by that indefatigable queen ant in the course of ages? . . . But all her different ants never combined to build an ant-hill. Their separate thoughts seemed to be incompatible, until they appeared in Ramakrishna as a symphony. The secret of their divine order was then revealed to Vivekananda[3] and he set out to build the City—*Civitas Dei*—the City of Mankind on the foundation of this golden concrete.

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[2] Lecture on the *Sages of India.* Cf. the Lectures on the *Vedanta and Indian Life* (on his return from America), on *the Vedanta in all its Phases* (Calcutta) from which I have taken some phrases and inserted them in the main text.

[3] "It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a Dualist, as ardent an Advaitist, as ardent a Bhakta, as a Jnani. And living with this man first put it into my head to understand

But he had not only to build the city but the souls of its inhabitants as well.

The Indian representatives, who are the authorities for his thought, have acknowledged that he was inspired in its construction by the modern discipline and organised effort of the West as well as by the Buddhist organisation of ancient India.[4]

He conceived the plan of an Order whose central Math, the mother house, was to "represent" for centuries to come "the physical body of Ramakrishna."[5]

This Math was to serve the double purpose of providing men with the means "of attaining their own liberation, so that they might prepare themselves for the progress of the world and the betterment of its conditions." A second Math was to realise the same object for women. These two were to be disseminated throughout the world, for the Swami's journeys and his cosmopolitan education had convinced him that the aspirations and needs of humanity at the present time

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the Upanishads and the texts of the Scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators. . . . I came to the conclusion that these texts are not all contradictory. . . . The one fact I found is, that . . . they begin with Dualistic ideas . . . and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas." I have seen the harmony which is at the back of all the faiths of India, and the necessity of the two interpretations—as the geocentric and the heliocentric theories of astronomy . . ." (On *The Vedanta in its application to Indian life*. Cf. *The Vedanta in all its phases.*)

[4] It was also the ideal of the Vedas: "Truth is one but she is called by different names."

[5] According to Swami Shivananda. (See above.) They are the very expressions reproduced by the present Abbot of the Math, Shivananda. Their nearness to the conception of the Church of Christ is obvious.

are universally one. The day seemed to have dawned for the "great India" of old to resume its ancient mission: that of evangelising the earth. But unlike "God's chosen peoples" in the past, who have interpreted their duty in the narrow sense of spiritual imperialism, implying a right to inflict their own uniform and tight-fitting casque, the law forces the Vedantist missionary according to his own law respect the natural faith of each individual. He desires only to reawaken the Spirit in man, "to guide individuals and nations to the conquest of their inner kingdom, by their own ways which are best suited to them, by the means corresponding best to the needs from which they suffer most." There is nothing in this to which the proudest nationalism can take exception. No nation is asked to forsake its own ways.[6] It is asked rather to develop the God that is in them to the fullest and highest degree.

But, like Tolstoy, whose thought, the offspring of his good sense and kind heart, was unknown to him, Vivekananda saw that his first duty was towards his nearest neighbour, his own people. Throughout the pages of this book the trembling of India incarnate in him has appeared again and again. His universal soul was rooted in its human soil; and the smallest pang suffered by its inarticulate flesh sent a repercussion throughout the whole tree.

He himself was the embodied unity of a nation containing a hundred different nations, wherein each nation, divided and subdivided into castes and sub-castes, seems like one of those diseased persons whose blood is too liquid to congeal, and his ideal was unity, both of

[6] "We ought never to think of taking away the characteristics of a nation, even if it can be proved that its character is composed of faults." (Vivekananda, 1899-1900.)

thought and of action. His claim to greatness lies in the fact that he not only *proved* its unity by reason, but *stamped* it upon the heart of India in flashes of illumination. He had a genius for arresting words, and burning phrases hammered out white-hot in the forge of his soul so that they transpierced thousands. The one that made the deepest impression was the famous phrase: *"Darida-Narayana"* (the beggar God). . . . "The only God that exists, the only God in whom I believe . . . my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races." It may justly be said that India's destiny was changed by him, and that his teaching re-echoed throughout Humanity.

Its mark is to be found, a burning scar, like the spear-thrust that pierced the heart of the *Son of Man* on the Cross—in the most significant happenings in India during the last twenty years. When the Swarajist party of the National Congress of India (a purely policital body) triumphed in the Calcutta Municipal Council, they drew up a programme of communal work called the *"Daridra Narayana"* Programme. And the striking words have been taken up again by Gandhi and are constantly used by him. At one and the same time the knot was tied between religious contemplation and service of the lower orders. "He surrounded service with a divine aureole and raised it to the dignity of a religion." The idea seized upon the imagination of India; and relief works for famine, flood, fire and epidemic, such as were practically unknown thirty years before, Seva-ashramas and Seva-samitis (retreats and societies for social service) have multiplied throughout the country. A rude blow had been struck at the selfishness of a purely contemplative faith. The rough words, which I have already quoted, uttered by the kindly Ramakrishna: "Religion is not for empty bellies . . ." embody the teaching that the desire to awaken spiritually in the heart of the people must be deferred until they have first been fed. Moreover, to bring them food is not enough; they must be taught how to procure it and work for it themselves. It is necessary to provide the wherewithal and the education. Thus it embraced a complete programme of social reform, although it held strictly aloof, in accordance with the wishes of Vivekananda from all political parties. On the other hand, it was the solution of the age-long conflict in India between spiritual life and active life. The service of the poor did not only help the poor, but it helped their helpers even more effectively. According to the old saying, "He who gives, receives." If Service is done in the true spirit of worship, it is the most efficacious means to spiritual progress. For "without doubt man is the highest symbol of God and his worship is the highest form of worship on earth."[7]

"Begin by giving your life to save the life of the dying, that is the essence of religion."[8]

So India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries by the hand of one of her own Sannyasins; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds, and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means.

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[7] Recalled by Shivananda, the Abbot of the Math in his Presidential Address of 1926.

[8] Words spoken by Vivekananda during the epidemic of 1899 to a pandit, who complained of not being able to talk to him of religion when he came to see him. He replied:

"So long as a single dog in my country is without food, my whole religion will be to feed it."

The world finds itself face to face with an awakening India. Its huge prostrate body lying along the whole length of the immense peninsula, is stretching its limbs and collecting its scattered forces. Whatever the part played in this reawakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century—(the greatest of whom we salute, the genial Precursor: Ram Mohun Roy) the decisive call was the trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras.

And the magic watchword was Unity. Unity of every Indian man and woman (and world unity as well); of all the powers of the spirit: dream and action, reason, love and work. Unity of the hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand gods springing from the same religious centre, the core of present and future reconstruction.[9] Unity of the thousand sects of Hinduism.[10] Unity within the vast Ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, both Western and Eastern. For—and herein lies the difference between the Awakening of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and that of Ram Mohun Roy and the Brahmo-samaj—in these days India refuses allegiance to the imperious civilisation of the West, she defends her own ideas, she has stepped into her age-long heritage with the firm intention not to sacrifice any part of it but to allow the rest of the world to profit by it, and to receive in return the intellectual conquests of the West. The time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilisation. Asia and Europe, the two giants are standing face to face as equals for the fist time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all.

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[9] In his last hour he repeated, "India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. If she gives it up for politics, she will die." The first Indian national movement, the Swadeshi Movement, desired to found its work on this spiritual basis, and its leader, Aurobindo Ghose, vindicated Vivekananda's ideas.

[10] The discovery and declaration of the unity of Hinduism (after the lectures of Colombo and Almora) is one of the chief and most original features of Vivekananda's work.

This "greater India," this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahamsa and the hero who translates his thought into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilising it. The present leaders of India: the king of thinkers, the king of poets and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore and Gandhi—have grown, flowered and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi.[11]

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[11] Gandhi has affirmed in public that the study of the Swami's books have been a great help to him, and that they increased his love and understanding of India. He wrote an Introduction to the English edition of the *Life of Ramakrishna,* and has presided over several anniversary festivals of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, celebrated by the Ramakrishna Mission.

"All the spiritual and intellectual life of Aurobindo Ghose," Swami Ashokananda wrote to me, "has been strongly influenced by the life and teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He is never tired of showing the importance of Vivekananda's ideas."

As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonised the two currents of the Brahmo-Samaj (transmitted to him by his father, the Manarshi) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda Rich in both, free

The time seems to me to have come for the rest of the world, ignorant as yet, except for isolated groups of Anglo-Saxons of this marvellous movement, to profit by it. Those who have followed me in this work must certainly have noticed how closely the views of the Indian Swami and his Master are in accord with many of our secret thoughts. I can bear witness to it, not only on my own account, but as a result of the intellectual avowal that has been made to me for the last twenty years by the hundreds of souls of Europe and America, who have made me their uninvited confidant and confessor. It is not because they and I have unwittingly been subject to infiltrations of the Indian spirit which predisposed us to the contagion—as certain representatives of the Ramakrishna Mission appear to believe. On this subject I have had courteous discussion with Swami Ashokananda, who, starting from the assumption of fact that Vedantic ideas are disseminated throughout the world, concluded that this was, partly at least, the work of Vivekananda and his Mission. I am quite convinced of the contrary. The work thought and even the name of Vivekananda[12] are practically unknown to the world in general (a fault that I am trying to rectify) and if, among the deluge of

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in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit. From the social and national point of view his only public *announcement* of his ideas was, if I am not mistaken, about 1906 at the beginning of the Swadeshi movement, four years after Vivekananda's death. There is no doubt that the breath of such a Fore-runner must have played some part in his evolution.

[12] One of the most significant facts has been his complete oblivion in the philosophic and learned circles that knew him as he travelled in Europe: thus in the circle of the *Schopenhauer Gesellschaft* I have had to re-teach, so to speak, Vivekananda's name to the disciples and successors of Paul Deussen, his host and friend.

ideas that come to water with their substance the burning soil of Europe and America in these days, one of the most life-giving and fertilising streams may be called "Vedantic," that is so simply in the same way that the natural speech of Monsieur Jourdain[13] was "prose" without his knowing it—because it is a natural medium of thought for mankind.

What are the so-called essentially Vedantic ideas? According to the definition of the most authoritative spokesman of modern Ramakrishnite Vedantism, they can be reduced to two principles:

1. *The Divinity of man,*
2. *The essential spirituality of Life,*

while the immediate consequences deduced from them are:

1. that every society, every state, every religion ought to be based on the recognition of this All Powerful presence latent in man;
2. that in order to be fruitful all human interest ought to be guided and controlled according to the ultimate idea of the spirituality of life.[14]

These ideas and aspirations are none of them alien to the West. Our Asiatic friends, who judge Europe by our bankrupts—out politicians, our traders, our narrow-minded officials, our "ravening wolves whose gospel is their maw," the whole of our colonial personnel (both the men and the ideas)—have good reason to doubt our spirituality. Nevertheless it is deep and real, and has never ceased to water the sub-soil and roots of our great Western nations. The oak of Europe would have long ago been hurled to the ground by the tempests that have raged round it, if it had not been for the mighty spiritual sap rising ceaselessly from its silent reservoir. They accord us a genius for action. But the unflagging feverishness of this age-long action would be impossible without inner fires—not the lamp of the Vestal Virgins, but a Cyclopian crater where the igneus substance is tirelessly amassed and fed. The writer of this work has denounced and disavowed the "Market Place"[15] of Europe, the smoke and cinders of the volcano with sufficient severity to be able to vindicate the burning sources of our inexhaustible spirituality. He has never ceased to recall their existence and the persistance of "the better Europe," both to outsiders who misunderstand her and to herself as she sits wrapped in silence. *"Silet sed loquitur."*[16] But her silence speaks more loudly than the babel of charlatans. Beneath the frenzy of enjoyment and power consuming themselves in surface eddied of a day or of an hour, there is a persistent and immovable treasure made up of abnegation, sacrifice and faith in the Spirit.

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[13] A popular character in France from Moliere's Comedy *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.*

[14] I depend here on a remarkable letter from Swami Ashokananda (September 11, 1927), which possesses all the weight and value of a manifesto on the Ramakrishna Mission. It was published together with my replies in the journals and reviews of the Mission.

As for the divinity of man, such a conception is possibly not one of the fruits of Christianity or of Greco-Roman culture,[17] if they are considered sepa-

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[15] Allusion to the name of one volume of *Jean Christophe,* by Romain Rolland, which castigates the ephemeral masters of the West, with their new-fangled ideas.

[16] "She is silent, but she speaks."

[17] "How did the West come by these ideas?" Swami Ashokananda wrote to me. "I did not think that Christianity and Greco-Roman culture were specially favourable to them. . . ."

But it is possible to answer Swami Ashokananda with the fact that Europe has not been solely made up of Christianised Greco-Roman culture. That is a pretension of the Mediterranean school, rately. But it is the fruit of the engrafted tree of Greco-Roman heroism superimposed upon the vine, whose golden juice is the blood of the Son of God.[18] And whether or no it has forgotten the Christian wine stalk and wine press, the heroic idealism of our democracies in their great moments and their great leaders have retained its taste and scent.[19] A religion whose God has been familiar for nineteen hundred years to the peoples of Europe by the name of the "Son of Man," cannot wonder that man should have taken it at its word and claimed Divinity for himself. The new consciousness of his power, and the intoxication of his young liberty were still more exalted by the fabu-

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which we do not admit. The groundwork of the autochthonous races of the West has been ignored as well as the tides of the Great Invasions that covered France and Mittel Europa with their fertile alluvion. The *"Hochgefuhl"* of Meister Eckhart and the great Gothics has been allowed to fall into oblivion.

"Gott hat alle Dinge durch mich gemacht, als ich stand in dem unergrundeten Grunde Gottes." (Eckhart.)

(God has created all things through me, when I stand in the bottomless deeps of God.)

And is it not a phenomenon proving the extraordinary immanence of these flashing intuitions dwelling deep within the soul of the West that they re-emerge at the beginning of the XIXth century with Fichte, who knew nothing of Hindu thought? (Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben, 1906.) Whole passages of Fichte and of Sankara can be placed side by side to show their complete identity. (Cf. a study of Rudolf Otto on *Fichte and the Advaita.*)

[18] I have already pointed out that at the beginning of its great religious thought—from its double source of Greece, and Jewish-Christianity—the West rests on similar foundations to those of Vedantism. I propose to devote a long note in the Appendix to a demonstration of this kinship in the great Hellenic systems and those of Alexandrine Christianity: Plotinus and Denis the Areopagite.

[19] The mighty sayings of our great French revolutionaries, such as St. Just, which bear strangely enough the double imprint of the Gospel and of Plutarch, are a striking example.

lous conquests of science, which in half a century have transformed the face of the earth. Man came to believe himself God without the help of India.[20] He was only too ready to bow down and worship himself. This state of over-valuation of his power lasted up to the very eve of the catastrophe of 1914, which shattered all his foundations. And it is from that very moment that the attraction and domination of Indian thought over him can be traced. How is this to be explained?

Very simply. His own paths had led the Westerner by his reason, his science and his giant will, to the crossroads where he met the Vedantic thought, that was the issue of our great common ancestors, the Aryan demi-Gods, who in the flower of their heroic youth saw from their high Himalayan plateaus, like Bonaparte when he had completed the conquest of Italy, the whole world at their feet. But at that critical moment when the test of the strong awaited them (as it appears under various names in the myths of all countries, and which our Gospel relates as the Temptation of Jesus on the mountain) the Westerner made the wrong choice. He listened to the tempter, who offered him the empire of the world spread out beneath him. From the divinity that he attributed to himself he saw and sought for nothing but that material power represented by the wisdom of India as the secondary and dangerous attribute of the inner force that alone can lead man to the Goal.[21] The result is that today the European—the "Apprentice Sorcerer"[22] sees himself overwhelmed by the elemental powers he has blindly unloosed. For he has nothing but the letter of the formula to control them. He has not been concerned with the spirit. Our civilisation in its dire peril has vainly invoked the spell of great words: Right, Liberty, Cooperation, the Peace of Geneva or Washington—but such words are void or filled with poisonous gas. Nobody believes in them. People distrust explosives. Words bring evils in their train, and have made confusion worse confounded. At the present time it is only a profound misunderstanding of the mortal illness from which a whole generation in the West has been suffering that makes it possible for the dregs and the scum who have known how to profit from the situation to murmur: "After us, the Deluge!" But millions of unsatisfied beings find themselves fatally driven to the cross-roads where they must choose between the abdication of what remains of their freedom, implied by the return of the discouraged soul to the park of the dead order of things wherein though imprisoned it is warmed and protected by the grease of the flock—and the great void in the night leading to the heart of the stronghold of the besieged Soul, where it may rejoin its still intact reserves and establish itself firmly in the *Feste Burg*[23] of the Spirit.

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[20] There is ample testimony to the thrill of joy that idealistic thinkers like Michelet have felt when they have recognised in India the forgotten ancestor of the *"Gospel of Humanity,"* that they have themselves brought forth. This was true in my own case as well.

(*The Gospel of Humanity* is a book by Michelet, from which I have taken the foreword of my *Life of Ramakrishna.*)

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[21] These attributes, these powers, I must remind my readers, were not denied by Vivekananda. He did not underestimate them, as a Christian ascetic might do; they had reached a higher stage than that of ignoble quietude, of the weakness of body and soul which he was never tired of denouncing; But it constitutes a lower stage than the terrace whence there is a commanding view of the whole house and the wide circle of the horizon. It must be attained by climbing without stopping. I refer to what I have said in the preceding pages about Raja-yoga.

[27] The title of a famous and often quoted poem of Goethe, "The Apprentice Sorcerer," who in the absence of his master managed to unloose the magic powers but was incapable of putting them again under the yoke, and so became their prey.

And that is where we find the hand of our allies, the thinkers of India stretched out to meet us: for they have known for centuries past how to entrench themselves in this *Feste Burg* and how to defend it, while we, their brethren of the Great Invasions, have spent our strength in conquering the rest of the world. Let us stop and recover our breath! Let us lick our wounds! Let us return to our eagle's nest in the Himalayas. It is waiting for us, for it is ours. Eaglets of Europe, we need not renounce any part of our real nature. Our real nature is in the nest, whence we formerly took our flight; it dwells within those who have known how to keep the keys of our keep—the Sovereign Self. We have only to rest our tired limbs in the great inner lake. Afterwards, my companions, with fever abated and new power flowing through your muscles, you will again resume your Invasions, if you wish to do so. Let a new cycle begin, if it is the Law. But this is the moment to touch Earth again, like Anteus, before beginning a new flight! Embrace it! Let your thoughts return to the Mother! Drink her milk! Her breasts can still nourish all the races of the world.

Among the spiritual ruins strewn all over Europe our "Mother India" will teach you to excavate the unshakable foundations of your Capitol. She possesses the calculations and the plans of the "Master Craftsman."[24] Let us rebuild our house with our own materials.

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[23] "A stronghold sure." The words of Luther's hymn.

[24] The term "Master Craftsman" was used for the architect of our Gothic cathedrals.

V

CAVE CANEM!

I HAVE no intention of concealing it: the great lesson taught by India is not without its own dangers, a fact that must be recognised. The idea of the Atman (the Sovereign Soul) is such strong wine that weak brains run the risk of being turned by it. And I am not sure that Vivekananda himself in his more juvenile moments was not intoxicated by its fumes as in the rodomantades of his adolesence, which Durgacharan has recorded, and to which Ramakrishna the indulgent listened, an ironic smile on his lips. Nag the pious, adopting the meek attitude Christianity has taught us, he said on one occasion "Everything happens according to the will of the Mother. She is the Universal Will. She moves, but men imagine that it is they who move."

But the impetuous Naren replied:

"I do not agree with you, with your He or She. *I* am the Soul. In me is the universe. In me it is born, it floats or disappears."

Nag: "You have not power enough to change one single black hair into a white one, and yet you speak of the Universe Without God's will not one blade of grass dies!"

Naren: "Without my will the Sun and the Moon could not move. At my will the Universe goes like a machine."[1] Such pride is only a hair's breadth removed from the bragging of the Matamore,[2] and yet there is a world of difference—for he who spoke the words was Vivekananda, an intellectual hero who weighed the exact meaning of his most audacious statements. Here is no foolish self-glorification or utterance of a delirious "Superman" taking his call before the curtain. This *Soul*, this *Atman*, this *Self* are not only those enclosed in the shell of my body with its

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[1] And Ramakrishna with a smile at his youthful pride, said to Nag: "Truly Naren can say that; for he is like a drawn sword."

And the pious Nag bowed down before the young Elect of the Mother. (Cf. The Saint Durgacharan Nag, *The Life of an Ideal Householder,* 1920, Ramakrishna Math, Madras.)

Girish Ch. Ghose described the two wrestlers with his usual humour: "Mahamaya (the great Illusion) would have found it exceedingly difficult to hold them in her toils. If she had tried to capture Naren, he would have made himself greater and still greater, so great that no chain was long enough. . . . And if she had tried her tricks on Nag he would have made himself smaller, and smaller, so small that he would have escaped between the meshes."

[2] A comic character in ancient Spanish and French comedy: the trumpeter who boasted of imaginary victories.

But there is also a strange likeness to the rodomontades of the young "Baccalaureate," who plucked the beard of Mephistopheles in the Second Faust. The expressions are practically the same, and the similarity would be still more surprising until it is remembered that Goethe very probably was carcicaturing the *"gigantische Gefuhl"* of Fichte, so closely, though unconsciously akin to the intoxication of the Indian Atman:

"Die Welt, sie war nicht, eh'ich sie erschuf,
Die Sonne führt ich aus dem Meer herauf;
Mit mir begann der Mond des Wechsels Lauf;
Da schmückte sich der Tag auf meinen Wegen;
Die Erde grünte, bluhee mir entgegen.
Auf meinen Wink, in jener ersten Nacht
Entfaltete sich aller Sterne Pracht......"

(The world was not before I created it. It was I who made the sun rise from the sea. With me the moon began her alternate course. Then day sprang beneath my feet. The earth grew green and blossomed before my face. At my gesture the splendour of the stars was unfolded in the first night.)

transient and fleeting life. The Soul is the Self within thee, within you, within all, within the universe and before and beyond it. It can only be attained through detachment from the ego. The words: "All is the Soul. It is the only Reality," do not mean that you, a man, are everything but that it depends upon yourself whether you take back your flask of stale water to the source of the snows whence flow all the streams of water.[3] It is within you, you are the source, if you know how to renounce the flask. And so it is a lesson of supreme disinterestedness and not of pride.

It is none the less true that it contains an exhilarating lesson, and that in the impetus of ascension it lends to the soul, the latter is apt to forget the humble starting point, to remember nothing but the final achievement and to boast of its Godlike plumes.[4] The air of great heights must be treated with caution. When all the Gods have been dethroned and nothing is left but the "Self," beware of vertigo![5] It was this that made

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[3] The Power behind me is not Vivekananda, but is He, the Lord . . ." Letter of Vivekananda, July 9, 1897, *Life of the Swami Vivekananda,* III. p. 178.

In spite of this very definite limitation, the Brahmo Samajists of India on several occasions have treated Vivekananda's claim to Divinity as blasphemy. (Cf. Chapter V of the pamphlet of B. Mozoomdar: *"Vivekananda, the Informer of Max Müller."*)

[4] A popular French expression referring to one of La Fontaine's Fables: "The jay who preened her peacock's feathers."

[5] The wise and simple Ramakrishna gave more earnest warnings against the danger of spiritual pride than Vivekananda. He said:

"To claim that 'I am He' . . . is not a sane attitude. Whoever has this ideal before having overcome the consciousness of the physical self will receive great hurt from it, and it will retard his progress, and little by little he will be drawn down. He deceives others and himself, in absolute ignornance of his real lamentable condition. . . ."

(Gospel of Ramakrishna, II, Chapter IV, p. 67, 1928 edition.)

Vivekananda careful in this ascent not to hurry the whole mass of souls not yet inured to the precipices and the wind of the chasms. He made each one climb by small stages leaning upon the staff of his own religion or of the provisional spiritual *Credos* of his age and country. But too often his followers were impatient and sought to gain the summits without due rest and preparation. Hence it was hardly surprising that some fell, and in their fall they were not only a danger to themselves, but to those who knew themselves to be inferior. The exaltation caused by the sudden realisation of inner power may provoke social upheavals, whose effect and range of disturbance are difficult to calculate beforehand. It is therefore perhaps all to the good that Vivekanada and his monastic order have consistently and resolutely kept aloof from all political action, although Indian Revolutionaries have on more than one occasion invoked his teaching and preached the Omnipotence of the Atman according to his words.

All great doctrine becomes fatally deformed. Each man twists it to his own profit, and even the Church founded to defend it from usury and change, is always tempted to stifle it and shut it up within its own proprietary walls. But considered in its unadulterated greatness, it is a magnificent reservoir of moral force. Since everything is within ourselves and nothing outside, we assume full responsibility for our thoughts and deeds, there is no longer a God or a Destiny on to whom we can basely shift it. No more Jahveh, no more Eumenides, no more "Ghosts."[6] Each one of us has to reckon only with himself. Each one is the creator of his own destiny. It rests upon his shoulders alone. He is strong enough to bear it. "Man has never lost his empire. The soul has never been bound. It is free by nature. It is without cause. It is beyond cause. Nothing can work upon it from without. . . . Believe that you are free and you will be! . . ."[7]

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[6] Allusion to one of Ibsen's plays.

"The wind is blowing; those vessels whose sails are unfurled catch it, and so they go forward on their way, but those whose sails are furled do not catch the wind. Is that the fault of the wind? . . . Blame neither man, nor God, nor anyone in the world. . . . Blame yourselves, and try to do better. . . . All the strength and succour you need is within yourselves. Therefore make your own future."[8]

You call yourselves helpless, resourceless, abandoned, despoiled? . . . Cowards! You have within yourselves the Force, the Joy and the Freedom, the whole of Infinite Existence. You have only to drink of it.[9]

From it you will not only imbibe torrents of energy, sufficient to water the world, but you will also imbibe the aspiration of a world athirst for those torrents and you will water it. For "He who is within you works through all hands, walks with the feet of all." *He* "is the mighty and the humble, the saint and the sinner, God and the earth-worm." He is everything, and "He is above all the miserable and the poor of all kinds and all races":[10] "for it is the poor who have done all the gigantic work of the world."[11]

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[7] *The Liberty of the Soul,* (Nov. 5, 1896), Vol. IX of *Complete Works.*

[8] *Jnana-yoga.* Cosmos (II. Microcosm).

[9] There is only one Infinite Existence which is at the same time Sat-Chit-Ananada (Existence, Knowledge absolute Bliss). And that is the inner nature of man. This inner nature is in its essence eternally free and divine. (Lecture in London, October, 1896). And Vivekananda added: "On this rationalistic religion the safety of Europe depends."

If we will realise only a small part of this vast conception, "if one-millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, 'You are all God, O ye men . . . and living beings, you are all manifestations of the one living Deity!' the whole world will be changed in half an hour. Instead of throwing tremendous bomb-shells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and evil thought, in every country people will think that it is all He."[12]

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Is it necessary to repeat that this is no new thought? (And therein lies its force!) Vivekananda was not the first (such a belief would be childish) to conceive the Universe of the human Spirit and to desire its realisation. But he was the first to conceive it in all its fullness with no exception or limit. And it would have been impossible for him to do so if he had not had before his eyes the extraordinary example of Ramakrishna.

It is no rare thing in these days to see occasional efforts by Congresses or Societies, where a few noble representatives of the great religions speak of union in the shape of a drawing together of all its different branches. Along parallel lines lay thinkers have tried to rediscover the thread, so many times broken, so many times renewed, running through blind evolution connecting the separate attempts—successful and unsuccessful—of reason; and they have again and again affirmed the unity of power and hope that exists in the Self of Humanity.[13]

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[10] Letter of July 9, 1897.

[11] March 11, 1898, Calcutta.

[12] *Jnana-yoga: The Real and the Apparent Man.*

But neither attempt, isolated as it has been (perhaps that explains its failure) has yet arrived at the point of bridging the gap between the most religious of secular thought and the most secular of religious thought. Even the most generous have never succeeded in ridding themselves completely of the mental prejudice that convinces them of the superiority of their own spiritual family—however vast and magnanimous it may be—and makes them view the others with suspicion because they also claim the right of primogeniture. Michelet's large heart would have been unable to maintain that it had "neither combatted nor criticised": even in his *Bible of Humanity,* he distinguished between the people of light and the people of darkness. And, naturally, he had a preference for his own race and his own small pond, the Mediterranean. The genial Ram Mohun Roy, when about 1897 he began to found his high "Universalism" with the intention of embracing Hindus, Mohammedans and Christians, erected the impenetrable barrier of theism—"God, the one and only without equal"—the enemy of polytheism. This prejudice is still upheld by the Brahmo-Samaj, and I find it again, veiled it is true, but none the less deep-rooted, in my most free-thinking friends of the Tagore circle, and in the most chivalrous champions of the reconciliation of religions—for example in the estimable *Federation of International Fellowship,* founded four or five years ago in Madras, which includes the most disinterested Anglo-Indian representatives of Protestant Christianity, and those of purified Hinduism, Jainism, and Theosophy: the popular religions of India are excluded from it and (characteristic omission) in the accounts of its meeting for several years the names of Vivekanda and Ramakrishna do not appear. Silence on that score! It might prove embarrassing. . . .

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[13] A warmer heart never existed than Michelet's: *"Omnia sub magna labentia flumina terra . . ."* "The Choir Universal". . . "The eternal communion of the human race. . . ."

Cf. his *Origines du droit francais,* 1837 and the beautiful book devoted to him by Jean Guehenno: *L'Evangile Eternel,* 1927.

I can well imagine it! Our European devotees of reason would do just the same. Reason and the one God, and the God of the Bible and of the Koran would find it easier to come to an understanding than any one of them to understand the multiple gods and to admit them into their temple. The tribe of Monos [14] at a pinch will admit that Monos may be a man of God; but it will not tolerate the proliferation of the One, on the ground that anything of the kind is a scandal and a danger! I can discover traces of the same thing in the sorrowful revolt of my dearest Indian friends, who have been brought up like their glorious Roy on absolute Vedantism and highest Western reason. They believed that at last after long pain and conflict they had succeeded in intergrating the latter in all the best Indian thought of the end of the XIXth century—and then Ramakrishna and his trumpeter, Vivekananda, appeared on the scene calling alike the privileged and the common herd to worship and love all forms of the ideal, even to the millions of faces that they hoped they had thrust into oblivion! . . . In their eyes this was a mental retrogression.

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[14] That is: personal Unity—both secular and religious.

But in mine it is a step in advance, a mighty Hanuman leap over the strait separating the continents.[15] I have never seen anything fresher or more potent in the religious spirit of all ages than this assimilation of all the gods existing in humanity, of all the faces of Truth, of the entire body of human Dreams, in the heart and the brain, and the great love of the Paramahamsa and the mighty arms of Vivekananda. They have carried the great message of fraternity to all believers, to all visionaries, to all who have neither belief nor vision but who seek for them in all sincerity, to all men of goodwill, to rationalists and religious men, to those who believe in great Books or in images, to those with the simple trust of the charcoal-burner, to agnostics and inspired persons, to intellectuals and illiterates. And not merely the fraternity of the first-born, whose right as the eldest dispossesses and subjects his younger brethren; but Equality of rights and privileges.

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[15] At the same time I do not want my Indian friends to interpret this vast comprehension of all forms of the religious spirit, from the lowest to the highest, as a preference in favour of the lower and less developed. Therein lies the opposite danger of reaction, which the belligerence provoked by the hostile or disdainful attitude of theists and rationalists also encourages. Man is always a creature of extremes. When the boat tips far to one side, he flings himself onto the other. We want equilibrium. Let us recall the real meaning of religious synthesis, as sought by Vivekananda. Its spirit was definitely progressive.

"I disagree with all those who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. My hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within." (Interviews with Sister Nivedita during the last journey from India to Europe, 1899.)

There is here no thought of return to the past. And if some blind and exaggerated followers of the Master have been self-deceived on the subject, the authorised representatives of the Ramakrishna Mission, who are the real heirs of Vivekananda's spirit, contrive to steer a course between the two reefs of orthodox reaction, which tries to galvanise the skeletons of ideas into fresh life, and rationalist pseudo-progress which is only a form of imperialistic colonisation by races of different mentality. Real progress is like the sap rising from the bottom of the roots throughout the whole tree.

I have said above that even the word "tolerance," which is the most magnificent generosity in the eyes of the West (what an old miserly peasant!), wounded the sense of justice and the proud delicacy of Vivekananda; for it seemed to him an insulting and protective concession such as a superior might make to weaker brethren whom he had no right to censure. He wished people to "accept" on a basis of equality and not to "tolerate." Whatever shape the vase might be that contained the water, the water was always the same, the same God. One drop is as holy as the ocean. And this declaration of equality between the humblest and the highest carries all the more weight because it comes from the highest—from an intellectual aristocrat, who believed that the peak he had scaled, the Advaitic faith, was the summit of all the mountains in the world. He could speak as one having authority for, like his Master Ramakrishna, he had traversed all the stages of the way. But, while Ramakrishna by his own powers had climbed all the steps from the bottom to the top, Vivekananda with Ramakrishna's help learnt how to come down them again from the top to the bottom and to know them and to recognize them all as the eyes of the One, who is reflected in their pupils like a rainbow.

But you must not suppose that this immense divinity spells anarchy and confusion. If you have fully digested Vivekananda's teaching on the yogas, you will have been impressed on all sides by the order of the superimposed designs, the beautiful prospective, the hierarchy—not in the sense of the relation between a master and his subjects, but of the architecture of stone masses or of music rising tier on tier: the great concord that steals from the keyboard under the hand of the Master orgainst. Each note has its own part in the harmony. No series of notes must be suppressed, and polyphony reduced to unison under the pretext that your own part is the most beautiful! Play your own part, perfectly and in time, but follow with your ear the concert of the other instruments joining in with you! The player who is so weak that instead of reading his own part, doubles that of his neighbour, wrongs himself, the work and the orchestra. What should we say of a double-bass if he insisted on playing the part of the first violin? Of of the instrument that announced "Silence the rest! Those who have learnt my part, follow me!" A symphony is not a class of babies being taught in a primary school to spell out a word all on the same tone!

This teaching condemns all spirit of propaganda whether clerical or lay, that wishes to mould other brains on its own model (the model of its own God, or of its own non-God, who is merely God in disguise). It is a theory which upsets all our preconceived and deep-seated ideas, all our age-long heritage. We can always find a good reason, Churchmen or Sorbonnes alike, for serving those who do not invite us to do so by uprooting the tares (together with the grain) from the patch of ground that provides them with food! Is it not the most sacred duty of man to root out the tares and briars of error from his own heart and from that of his neighbour—especially from that of his neighbour? And error surely is nothing but that which is not truth to us? Very few men are great enough to rise above this naively egocentric philanthropy. I have hardly met a single one among my masters and companions of the rationalist and scientific secular army—however virile, strong and generous they appeared to be: for with their hands full of the harvest they had gleaned, their one idea was to shower it will-nilly on humanity. . . . "Take, eat, either voluntarily or forcibly! What is good for me must be good for you. And if you perish by following my prescription, it will be your fault and not the fault of the prescription, as in the case of Molière's doctors.[16] The Faculty is always right." And the opposite camp of the Churches is still worse, for there it is a question of saving souls for eternity. Every kind of holy violence is legitimate, for a man's real good.

That is why I was glad to hear Gandhi's voice quite recently—in spite of the fact that his temperament is the antithesis of Ramakrishna's or Vivekananda's—remind his brethren of the International Fellowships, whose pious zeal disposed them to evangelise, of the great universal principle of religious "Acceptation," the same principle Vivekananda had preached:[17] *"After long study and experience,"* he said, *"I have come to these conclusions, that:*

1. *All religions*—(and by that, I, the Author of this

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[16] The Faculty—the Faculty of Medicine (this passage is an imitation of the style of Molière).

[17] Notes taken at the annual meeting of the Council of the Federation of International Fellowships at the Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, 13-15 January, 1928.

work, personally understand those of reason as well as of faith)—*are true;*

2. *All religions have some error in them;*

3. *All religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism.*

My veneration for other faiths is the same as for my own faith. In consequence the thought of conversion is impossible. The object of the Fellowships ought to be to help a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Musulman to become a better Musulman, a Christian to become a better Christian. An attitude of protective tolerance is opposed to the spirit of the International Fellowships. If in my innermost heart I have the suspicion that my religion is the truest, and that other religions are less true, then, although I may have a certain kind of fellowship with the others, it is an extremely different kind from that required in the International Fellowships. Our attitude towards the others ought to be absolutely frank and sincere. Our prayer for others ought never to be: 'God! give them the light Thou hast given to me!' But:—'Give them all the light and truth they need for their highest development!' "

And when the inferiority of animist and polytheistic superstitions, which seemed to the aristocracy of the great theistic religions to be the lowest step on the human ladder, was urged against him, Gandhi replied softly:

"In what concerns them I ought to be humble and beware lest arrogance should sometimes speak through the humblest language. It takes a man all his time to become a good Hindu, a good Christian, or a good Musulman. It takes me all my time to be a good Hindu, and I have none left over for evangelising the animist; for I cannot really believe that he is my inferior." [18]

At bottom Gandhi not only condemns all religious propaganda either open or covert, but all conversion, even voluntary, from one faith to another, is displeasing to him:—"If several persons think that they ought to change their religious 'etiquette,' I cannot deny that they are free to do so—but I am sorry to see it."

Nothing more contrary to our Western way of religious and secular thought can be imagined. At the same time there is nothing from which the West and the rest of the modern world can derive more useful teaching. At this stage of human evolution, wherein both blind and conscious forces are driving all natures to draw together for "Co-operation or death"—it is absolutely essential that the human consciousness should be impregnated with it, until this indispensable principle becomes an axiom: that every faith has an equal right to live, and that there is an equal duty incumbent upon every man to respect that which his neighbor respects. In my opinion Gandhi, when he stated it so frankly, showed himself to be the heir of Ramakrishna.[19]

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[18] To a colleague who asked him: "Can I not hope to give my religious experience of God to my friend?"—Gandhi replied:—"Can an ant desire his own knowledge and experience to be given to an elephant? And vice versa? . . . Pray rather that God may give your friend the fullest light and knowledge—not necessarily the same that He had given to you."

Another asked:—"Can we not share our experience?"

Gandhi replied, "Our spiritual experiences are necessarily shared (or communicated) whether we suspect it or not—but by our lives (by our example) not by our words which are a very faulty medium. Spiritual experiences are deeper than thought itself . . . (From the one fact that we live) our spiritual experience will overflow. But where there is a consciousness of sharing (the will to work spiritually) there is selfishness. If you Christians wish another to share your Christian experience, you will raise an intellectual barrier. Pray simply that your friends may become better men, whatever their religion."

There is no single one of us who cannot take this lesson to heart. The writer of these lines—he has vaguely aspired to this wide comprehension all through his life—feels only too deeply at this moment how many are his shortcomings in spite of his aspirations; and he is grateful for Gandhi's great lesson, the same lesson that was preached by Vivekananda, and still more by Ramakrishna, to help him to achieve it.

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[19] The proper mission of Ramakrishna's disciples seems to me to be precisely this—to watch that his vast heart, which was open to all sincere hearts in the world and to all forms of their love and their faith, should never, like other "Sacred Hearts," be shut up upon an altar, in a Church, where access is only permitted after giving the password of a *Credo*. Ramakrishna ought to be for all. All are his. He ought not to *take*. He should *give*. For he who *takes* will suffer the fate of those who have taken in the past, the Alexanders, the conquerors: their conquests vanish with them into the grave. He alone is Victorious in space and time who *gives*, who gives himself completely—without any thought of return.

CONCLUSION

But this difference will always remain between the thought of Gandhi and that of Vivekananda, that the latter, being a great intellectual—which Gandhi is not in the slightest degree—could not detach himself as Gandhi has done from systems of thought. While both recognised the validity of all religions, Vivekananda made this recognition an article of doctrine and a subject of instruction. And that was one of the reasons for the existence of the Order he founded. He meant in all sincerity to abstain from any kind of spiritual domination whatsoever.[1] But the sun cannot moderate his rays. His burning thought was operative from the very fact that it existed. And although Vivekananda's Advaitism might revolt from the annexationist propaganda of faith, it was sufficient for him to appear as a great flaming fire, for other wandering souls to gather round it. It is not given to all to renounce their power to command. Even when they speak to themselves the Vivekanandas speak to humanity. They cannot whisper if they would and he did not wish to do so. A great voice is made to fill the sky. The whole earth is its sounding box.[2] That is why, unlike Gandhi, whose natural ideal is in proportion to his nature, free, equitable, average, and measured, tending in the realm of faith as in politics to a Federation of men of goodwill,—Vivekananda appeared despite himself as an emperor, whose aim was to discipline the independent but co-ordinate kingdoms of the spirit under the sceptre of the One. And the work which he founded has proceeded according to this plan.

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[1] All those who knew him bear witness to his absolute respect for the intellectual freedom of those near him—at least so long as they had not subscribed to any formal engagement towards his monastic order and himself by initiation of a sacred character. The beautiful text which follows breathes his ideal of harmonious freedom.

"Nistha (devotion to one ideal) is the beginning of realisation. Take the honey out of all flowers; sit and be friendly with all; pay reverence to all:—say to all:—'Yes, brother, yes, brother;' but keep firm in your own way. A higher stage is actually to take the position of the other. If I am all, why can I not really and actively sympathise with my brother and see with his eyes? While I am weak I must stick to one course (Nistha) but when I am strong, I can feel with every other, and perfectly sympathise with his ideas. The old idea was—'Develop one idea at the expense of the rest.' The modern way is 'harmonious development.' A third way is 'to develop the mind and control it,' then put it where you will; the result will come quickly. That is developing yourself in the truest way. Learn concentration and use it in one direction. Thus you lose nothing. He who gets the whole must have the parts too." (Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata,* March, 1929.)

His dream was to make the great monastery, the mother house of Belur, a human "Temple of Knowledge." And, since with him "to know" and "to do" were synonymous,[3] the ministry of Knowledge was subdivided into three departments: 1. Charity (Annadana, that is the gift of food and other physical necessities);

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[2] "Knowledge of the Advaita was hidden for a long time in forests and caves. It was given to me to make it come forth from its seclusion and to carry it into the heart of family life and of society, until they are interpenetrated with it. We shall make the drum of the Advaita sound in all places, in the markets, on the hills and through the plains. . . ."

(*Book of Vivekananda's Dialogues,* collected by his disciple, Sarachandra Chakravarti. Part I.)

[3] "What good is the reading of the Vedanta to me? We have to realise it in practical life." *(ibid.)*

2. Learning (Vidyana, that is intellectual knowledge);

3. Meditation (Jnana-dana, that is spiritual knowledge)—the synthesis of all three teachings being indispensable to the constitution of a man. There was to be gradual purification, necessary progression—starting from the imperious necessities of the body of humanity, which needs nourishment and succour [4]—up to the supreme conquest of the detached spirit absorbed in Unity.

To Vivekananda a light is not made to be hidden under a bushel; hence every kind of means for self-development should be at everybody's door. No man ought to keep anything for himself alone.

"Of what consequence is it to the world if you or I attain to Mukti (Bliss)? We have to take the whole universe with us to Mukti . . . Unparalleled Bliss! The Self realised in all living beings and in every atom of the universe." [5]

The first statutes drawn up by him in May 1897 for the foundation of the Ramakrishna Mission established expressly that "The aim of the Association is to preach those truths, which Sri Ramakrisna has, for the good of humanity given out and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to keep those truths being made practical in the lives of others for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement."

Hence the spirit of propaganda was established in the doctrine whose essence is "the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion."[6]

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[4] Vivekananda wished to impose five years of novitiate in the department of social service (homes, dispensaries, free and popular kitchens, etc.)—before entering the temple of science—and five years of intellectual apprenticeship before access to spiritual intiation properly so-called. *(ibid.)*

[5] *Ibid.*

It is so difficult to extirpate from the human spirit the need to affirm to others that its own truth and its own good must also be their truth and their good!—And it may be asked whether, if it were extirpated, it would still be "human." Gandhi's spiritual detachment is almost disincarnate, as was the universal attachment of Ramakrishna, the lover, to all minds, although he arrived by it by the inverse process. Vivekananda never achieved this detachment from his body. He remained flesh and bones. Even from his appearance it was possible to infer that although absolute detachment bathed the heights of his mind, the rest of his body remained immersed in life and action. His whole edifice bears this double impress: the basement is a nursery of apostles of truth and social service who mix in the life of the people and the movements of the times. But the summit is the *Ara Maxima,* the lantern of the dome, the spire of the cathedral, the Ashram of all Ashrams, the Advaita built on the Himalayas, where the two hemispheres, the West and the East, meet at the confluence of all mankind in absolute Unity.

The architect had accomplished his work. Brief though his life, he saw before he died, as he said: his "machine in strong working order"; he had inserted in the massive block of India "a lever for the good of humanity which no power can drive back."[7]

Together with our Indian brethren it is our task to bear upon it. And if we cannot flatter ourselves that the crushing mass of human inertia,—the first and last cause of crime and sin—will be raised for centuries to come, what matters a century! We shake it nevertheless . . . *"E pur si muove. . . .* "[8] And new gangs will always arise to replace the worn out gangs. The work begun by the two Indian Masters, will be carried on resolutely by other workmen of the spirit in other parts of the world. In whatever tunnel a man may be digging he is never out of sound of the sap being dug on the other side of the mountain. . . .

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[6] The "Statutes" proclaimed some lines below.

[7] Letter of July 9, 1897.

My European companions, I have made you listen through the wall to the blows of Asia, the coming One. . . . Go to meet her. She is working for us. We are working for her. Europe and Asia are the two halves of the Soul. Man *is not* yet. He *will be.* God is resting and has left to us his most beautiful creation —that of the Seventh Day:[9] to free the sleeping forces of the enslaved Spirit; to reawaken God in man; to re-create the Being itself.

R. R.

9 October 1928.

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[8] "And still it moves." The words of Galileo when he was forced to deny the movement of the earth.

[9] Allusion to the seven days creation in Genesis.

PART III

I

THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

THE spiritual harvest of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda was not scattered broadcast to the winds. It was garnered by Vivekananda's own hands and placed under the protection of wise and laborious farmers, who knew how to keep it pure and to bring it to fruition.

In the Life of Vivekananda I have described his foundation in May 1897 of a great religious Order to whose trust he confided the storing and administration of his Master's spirit—the Ramakrishna Mission. And there we have also traced the first steps of the Order with its twofold activity of preaching and social work, from its inception up to Vivekananda's death.

His death did not destroy the edifice. The Ramakrishna Mission has established itself and has grown.[1] Its first director, Brahmananda, busied himself to secure it a regular constitution. By an act of donation prepared by Vivekananda, the Order of Sannyasins of Ramakrishna, domiciled in the Belur Math, near Calcutta, became possessed in 1899 of a legal statute. But in order that the Order might be empowered to receive gifts for its charitable work, the necessity arose for a legal fiction which doubled the original foundation into a Math (monastery) and a Mission. The latter was duly registered on May 4, 1909, "under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor-General of India in Council." The Math and the Mission are really the two aspects, the monastic and the philanthropic, of the same organisation, both controlled by the General Council of the Order. But the popular name, wrongly applied to the whole, is that of the Ramakrishna Mission.

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[1] We can follow its development in detail in the General Reports of the Mission, published by the Governing Body of Belur Math from 1913 to 1926.

The aims of the Mission, as defined in the Memorandum annexed to the act of the registration of 1909, are divided into three classes:

1. Charitable works.
2. Missionary works (organisation and publications).
3. Educational works.

Each is subdivided into permanent institutions (Maths, Ashrams, Societies, Homes of Service, Orphanages, Schools, etc.)—and transient enterprises, activities of casual help called into being by urgent but temporary necessity.[2]

In the Maths or monasteries there are regular monks, who have renounced the world and have received initiation after a period of novitiate. They are constantly moved from one centre to the other according to the exigencies of the work, but they remain under the control of the Council General of the Order at Belur. There are some five hundred of them.

A second army is composed of laymen (householders), forming a kind of Third Estate. They are intimate disciples who come for spiritual instruction to the Maths where they spend short periods of retreat. They number no less than twenty-five thousand.

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[2] The first General Report of 1913 enumerated twenty: for the relief of famine in ten districts, (1897, 1899, 1900, 1906, 1907, 1908)—of flood in three districts, (1899, 1900, 1909)—of epidemics in three districts (1899, 1900, 1904, 1905, 1912, 1913)—of fire (1910)—of earthquakes (1899, 1905).

The other class of the reserve, rising to some millions, is composed of those who have partly or wholly adopted the ideals of the Mission, and serve it from outside without labelling themselves its disciples.

During the first part of April 1926, the Mission held an extraordinary general Reunion at the Math of Belur with the object of forming some idea of its full scope. About 120 institutions were represented: of which half were in Bengal, a dozen in Behar and Orissa, fourteen in the United Provinces, thirteen in the Province of Madras, one in Bombay. Outside the Peninsula there were three centres in Ceylon directing nine schools where fifteen hundred children were being educated, a student centre at Jaffra, not to mention the Vivekananda Society at Colombo. In Birmanie was a monastic centre with a large free hospital. Another centre was at Singapore; There were six in the United States: at San Francisco, the Crescenta near Los Angeles, San Antone Valley, Portland, Boston, New York—without reckoning the Vedanta Societies of St. Louis, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Tacoma, etc. At San Paola in Brazil a group of men have busied themselves since 1900 with Vivekananda's teaching. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* and the *Raja-yoga* of Vivekananda have been translated into Portuguese. *The Circle of the Communion of Thought* which has 43,000 members publishes Vedantic studies in its organ: *Thought.*

The Order possesses a dozen Reviews: three monthly reviews at Calcutta (two in Bengali: *Udboddham* and *Viswavami,* and one in Hindi: *Samayana*)—one in

Tamil at Madras: *Sri Ramakrishna Vihayan;* one in Malyalam in Travancore: *Prabuddha-Keralam*:—two monthly and one weekly in English: *Prabuddha Bharata* at Mayavati in the Himalayas, *Vedanta Kesari,* at Madras; *The Morning Star* at Patra—without counting one in Canarese, and one in Gujerati run by the disciples of the Mission; in the Federated Malay States a monthly Review in English: *The Voice of Truth;* in the United States a monthly review in English: *The Message of the East* published by the Crescenta centre.[3]

The education given within the monasteries follows the principles laid down by Vivekananda.[4] "The aim of the monastery," he had said "is to create man"—the complete man, who "would combine in his life an immense idealism with perfect common sense." Hence in turn with hardly a break the initiates practise spiritual exercises, intense meditation, reading and study of the sacred and philosophical texts and manual work: household duties, baking, gardening and sewage farming, bridges and roads, farms and agriculture, the care of animals—as well as the double ministry of religion and medicine.

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[3] I owe these particulars to Swami Ashokananda, the chief editor of the *Phabuddha Bharata,* at Mayavati, Advaita Ashrama.

[4] Vivekananda's spirit was essentially realistic both in education and religion. He said "The real teacher is he who can infuse all his power into the bent of his pupil . . . who will take someone as he stands and help him forward . . ." (1896, in America). And in his interviews with the Maharajah of Khetri (before his first journey to America) he laid down this curious definition:—"What is education? Education is the nervous association of certain ideas." He then explained that it was a question of developing ideas into instincts. Until they had reached that stage they could not be considered to be real and vital possessions of knowledge. And he gave as an example "the perfect educator" Ramakrishna, whose renunciation of gold had been so vital that his body could not bear to come into physical contact with the metal.

He said that it was the same with religion. "Religion is neither word nor doctrine. . . . It is deed. It is to be and to become. Not to hear and accept. It is the whole soul changed into that which it believes. That is what religion is." *(Study of Religion)*

And I will permit myself to add that although I recognise the effectiveness of such an education, my free spirit is opposed to the dominion of certain ideas over the whole nature of an individual. I would rather use the same contagious energy to fill his being with the inextinguishable thirst for liberty: a freedom from control ever keenly aware of its own thoughts.

"Equal importance should be given to the triple culture of the head, the heart and the hands," said the great Abbot, the present head of the direction of the Order, Swami Shivananda.[5] Each one if practised to the exclusion of the rest is bad and harmful.

The necessities of organisation called for a hierarchy within the Order. But all are equal in their allegiance to the common Rule. The Abbot Shivananda reminded them that "the chiefs ought to be the servants of all." And his presidential address of 1926 ended with an admirable declaration of universal happiness, accorded in equal measure to each one who serves whatever his rank:

"Be like the arrow that darts from the bow. Be like the hammer that falls on the anvil. Be like the sword that pierces its object. The arrow does not murmur if it misses the target. The hammer does not fret if it falls in the wrong place. And the sword does not lament if it breaks in the hands of the wielder. Yet there is joy in being made, used and broken; and an equal joy in being finally set aside. . . ."

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[5] Presidential Address of the first Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, April 1, 1926.

It would be interesting to discover how this powerful organisation affects the diverse political and social currents that have been flowing for the last twenty years through the body of awakened India.

It repudiates politics. In this it is faithful to the spirit of its Master, Vivekananda, who could not find sufficiently strong terms of disgust wherewith to spurn all collusion with politics. And perhaps this has been the wisest course for the Mission to pursue. For its religious, intellectual and social action, eminently pro-Indian as it is, is exercised in the profound and silent depths of the nation, without giving any provocation to the British power to fetter it.

But even so it has been obliged to lull the suspicions of the ever vigilant watch dogs by continual prudence. On more than one occasion Indian revolutionaries, by using the words and name of Vivekananda, have placed it in a very embarrassing position. On the other hand its formal declarations of abstention from politics during hours of national crisis, have laid it open to the accusation of patriots that it is indifferent to the liberties of India. The second General Report of the Mission, which appeared in May 1919, testified to these difficulties and laid down precisely the non-political line the Math was to follow. It is not necessary to give a summary of it here.

1906, the year of the division of the Province of Bengal,[6] marked the beginning of the Swadeshi movement and political unrest. The Mission refused to take any part in them. It even thought it prudent to suspend its work of preaching in Calcutta, Decca and Western

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[6] A short description of political events in India after Vivekananda's death will be found in the Chapter immediately following the present one.

Bengal, although it still carried on its charitable activities. In 1908 it was obliged to make a rule not to receive strangers at night in its establishments, because it feared that some people were abusing its hospitality in order to prepare their political offensives. It transpired from the answers of political prisoners that more than one of them, disguised under the robe of a sannyasin, had cloaked these designs under the name of its work and religion. Copies of the Gita and Vivekananda's writings were found on several of them. The Government kept a strict watch over the Mission, but it continued to preach its ideal of social service; it publicly reproved all sectarian and vengeful spirit, and even condemned selfish patriotism, pointing out that eventually it led to degradation and ruin. It replied alike to the accusations of the patriots and the suspicions of the government by these words of Vivekananda, which it inscribed on the covers of its publications: "The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself."

Nevertheless, the struggle grew more bitter. According to their usual tactics of compromising all independent spirits, the revolutionary agitators used portions of the religious and philosophical publications of the Mission in a twisted form. In spite of its public declaration in April 1914, the Governing Committee of Bengal in its Report of 1915 accused the Mission and its founders of having been the first instigators of Indian nationalism.

And in 1916 the first Governor of Bengal, N. D. Carmichael, although he sympathised with Ramakrishna's work, announced publicly that terrorists were becoming members of the Order in order to achieve their ends with more ease; nothing more was needed for the dissolution of the Mission. Fortunately devoted English and American friends in high places came forward and warmly supported its defence in a long Memoir of January 22, 1917, so that the danger was averted.

It has been seen that, like Gandhi, the Ramakrishna Mission absolutely repudiates violence in politics. But it is remarkable that the violent have more than once invoked it, despite its protestations: a thing that I believe they have never dreamed of doing in the case of Gandhi. And yet Ramakrishna's followers, more absolutely than Gandhi, reject all compromise, not only with certain forms of politics, but with them all.

This seeming paradox comes from the individual character. . . . I might almost say—from the temperament of Vivekananda, their Master. His fighting and ardent Kshatriya nature appears even in his renunciation and Ahimsa (Non-Resistance).

"He used to say that the Vedanta may be professed by a coward, but it could be put into practise only by the most stout-hearted. The Vedanta was strong meat for weak stomachs. One of his favourite illustrations used to be that the doctrine of non-resistance necessarily involved the capacity and ability to resist and a conscious refraining from having recourse to resistance. If a strong man, he used to say, deliberately refrained from making use of his strength against either a rash or weak opponent, then he could legitimately claim higher motives for his action. If, on the other hand, there was no obvious superiority of strength or the strength really lay on the side of his opponent, then the absence of the use of strength naturally raised the suspicion of cowardice. He used to say that that was the real essence of the advice by Sri Krishna to Arjuna."

And talking to Sister Nivedita in 1898 he said:

"I preach only the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea *strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedanta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was Non-Resistance or Non-Injury. But I think this a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-Injury[7] lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now I would make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness. My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke his silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And thou also art He!' "

Here we can recognise Gandhi's conception: a *Non-Resistance* in name, that is in reality the most potent of Resistances,—a *Non-Acceptation,* only fit for spiritual heroes. There is no place in it for cowards. . . .[8] But if, in practise, Gandhi's ideal is akin to that of Vivekananda, to what passionate heights Vivekananda carried it. With Gandhi all things are moderated, calm and constant. With Vivekananda everything is a paroxysm, of pride, of faith, or of love. Beneath each of his words can be felt the brazier of the burning Atman—the Soul-God. It is then easy to understand that exalted revolutionary individualism has wished to use these flames in social incendiarism, and this is a danger that the wise successors of the great Swami, who have charge of his heritage, have often had to avoid.

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[7] Literally 'Non-Injury' (Do no hurt).

[8] The temperament of a born fighter like Vivekananda, could only have arrived at this heroic ideal of Non-Acceptation without violence, by violating his own nature. And he did not attain to it without a long struggle.

Even in 1898 before the pilgrimage to the cave of Amarnath, which produced a moral revolution in him, when he was asked:

"What should we do when we see the strong oppress the weak?" he replied:

"Why, thrash the strong, of course."

On another occasion he said:

"Even forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not true: fight is better. *Forgive* when you could bring (if you wished) legions of angels to an easy victory." (That is to say, forgive when you are the stronger.)

Another asked him:

Further the tenacious and unwavering moderation of Gandhi's action is mixed up with politics, and sometimes becomes their leader, but Vivekananda's heroic passion (that of Krishna in battle) rejects politics of all kinds, so that the followers of Ramakrishna have kept themselves aloof from the campaigns of Gandhi.

It is regrettable that the name, the example and the words of Vivekananda have not been invoked as often as I could have wished in the innumerable writings of Gandhi and his disciples.[9] The two movements, al-

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"Swamiji, ought one to seek an opportunity of death in defence of right, or ought one to learn never to react?"

"I am for no reaction," replied the Swami slowly, and after a long pause added, "—for Sannyasins. Self-defence for the householder."

(Cf. *Life of Vivekananda,* 1915 edition, Vol. III, p. 279.)

[9] But on January 30, 1921, Gandhi went on pilgrimage with his wife and several of his lieutenants (Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mulana Muhammed Ali, etc.) to the sanctuary of Belur for the anniversary festival of Vivekananda's birth; and from the balcony of his room declared to the people his veneration for the great Hindu, whose word had lighted in him the flame of love for India.

In this present year (March 14, 1929) Gandhi presided at Rangoon over the festival of the Ramakrishna Sevashrama, in honour of the 94th anniversary of Ramakrishna. And while the though independent of each other and each going its own way, have none the less the same object. They may be found side by side in the task of service devoted to public well-being; and both of them though with different tactics follow the great design—the national unity of the whole of India. The one advances to the great day by his patient Non-Co-operation struggles it has been crowned with victory during the past year, 1928)—the other by peaceful but irresistible universal Co-operation. Take for example the tragic question of Untouchability. The Ramakrishna Mission does not conduct a Crusade against it like Gandhi, but better still, denies it according to the words of Vivekananda, that I have just quoted: "It is weakness which conceives the idea of resistance."

"We think," Swami Ashokananda wrote to me, "that a rear attack is better than a frontal one. We invite people of all classes, beliefs and races, to all our festivals, and we sit and eat together, even Christians. In our Ashrams we do not keep any distinction of caste, either among the permanent residents or among visitors. Quite recently at Trivandium, the capital of the Hindu state of Travancore, notorious for its extreme orthodoxy and its obstinate maintenance of untouchability, all the Brahmin and non-Brahmin castes sat together

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followers of Ramakrishna saluted in him the realisation of Ramakrishna's ideal in a life of action, Gandhi paid a beautiful tribute to the Ramakrishna Mission:

"Wherever I go," he said, "The followers of Ramakrishna invite me to meet them; I feel that their blessings go with me. Their rescue works are spread over India. There is no point where they are not established on a large or a small scale. I pray God that they will grow, and that to them will be united all who are pure and who love India."

After him his Mohammedan lieutenant, Maulana Muhammed Ali, extolled Vivekananda.

to take their meals on the occasion of the opening of our new monastery in that town; and no social objection was raised. It is by indirect methods that we try to put an end to the evil, and we think that thus we can avoid a great deal of irritation and opposition."

And so, while the great liberal Hindu sects like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prathana Samaj, etc., storm orthodoxy from the front, with the result that, having broken their bridges behind them, they find themselves separated from the mass of their people, and partially rejected by the mother Church, so that their reforms are lost upon it—the Ramakrishna Mission believes in never losing contact with the Hindu rank and file; it remains within the bosom of the Church and of society, and from thence carries out reforms for the benefit of the whole community. There is nothing aggressive or iconoclastic, nothing to wound like that attitude of Protestant rigidity, which, although armed with reason, has too often torn the universe by schism. Keep within the Catholic fold, but maintain a patient and humanised reason, so that you carry out reform from within, and never from without.

"Our idea," Swami Ashokananda wrote in another place, "is to awaken the higher conscience of Hinduism. That done, all necessary reforms will follow automatically."

The results already achieved speak volumes for these tactics. For example the amelioration of the condition of women has been vigorusly pursued by the Brahmo-Samaj, their self-constituted and chivalrous champion. But the suggested reforms have often been too radical and their means too heterodox. "Vivekananda said that the new ought to be a development rather than a condemnation and rejection of the old. . . . The female institutions of the Ramakrishna Mission combining all that is best in Hinduism and the West, are today considered models of what the education of women ought to be." It is the same with regard to service of the lower classes, but I have already emphasised this point sufficiently and need not return to it. The excellent effect of a spirit that weds the new to the old has been also felt in the renaissance of Indian culture, to which other powerful elements have contributed, such as the glorious influence of the Tagores and their school at Shantiniketan. But it must never be forgotten that Vivekananda and his devoted Western disciple, Sister Nivedita, were their predecessors; and that the great current of popular Hindu education began with Vivekananda's return to Colombo, Vivekananda was indignant that the Indian Scriptures, the Upanishads, Gita, Vedanta, etc., were practically unknown to the people, and reserved for the learned. Today Bengal is flooded with translations of the Sacred Writings in the vernacular and with commentaries upon them. The Ramakrishna schools have spread a knowledge of them throughout India.

Nevertheless—(and this is the most beautiful characteristic of the movement)—the Indian national renaissance is not accompanied, as is the general rule, by a sentiment of hostility or superiority towards the alien. On the contrary: it holds out the hand of fellowship to the West. The followers of Sri Ramakrishna admit Westerners, not only into their sanctuaries but into their ranks—(an unheard of thing in India)—into their holy order of Sannyasins, and have insisted on their reception on an equal footing by all, even by the orthodox monks. Moreover the latter, the orthodox Sannyasins who in their hundreds of thousands exercise a constant influence on the Hindu masses, have gradually adopted the ways and the ideas of Ramakrishna's followers, to whom they were at first opposed, and whom they accused of heresy. Finally the hereditary Order of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda has made it a rule never to take anything into the world that makes for division, but only what makes for union.

"Its sole object," it was said at the public meeting of the Extraordinary General Convention of the Mission in 1926, "Is to bring about harmony and co-operation between the beliefs and doctrines of the whole of humanity"—to reconcile religions among themselves and to free reason—to reconcile classes and nations—to found the brotherhood of all men and all peoples.

And further, because the Ramakrishna Mission is permeated with a belief in the quasi-identity of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, of the universal Self and the individual Self—because it knows that no reform can be deep and lasting in a society unless it is first rooted in an inner reformation of the individual soul—it is on the formation of the universal man that it expends its greatest care. It seeks to create a new human type, wherein the highest powers at present scattered and fragmentary, and the diverse and complementary energies of man shall be combined—the heights of intelligence towering above the clouds, the sacred wood of love, and the rivers of action. The great Rhythm of the soul beats from Pole to Pole, from intense concentration to: *"Seid umschlungen, Millionem!"*[10] with its universal appeal. As it is possible in spite of difficulties to attain this ideal in the case of a single man, the Ramakrishna Mission is trying to realise the same ideal in its Universal Church—the symbol of its Master—"his Math, which represents the physical body of Ramakrishna." [11]

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[10] The Ode to Joy of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Here we can see the rhythm of history repeating itself. To European Christians such a dream recalls that of the Church of Christ. The two are sisters. And if a man wishes to study the dream that is nineteen hundred years old, he would do better, instead of looking for it in books that perish, to listen at the breast of the other to its young heart-beats. There is no question of comparison between the two figures of the Man-Gods. The elder will always have the privilege over the younger on account of the crown of thorns and the spear thrust upon the Cross, while the younger will always have an irresistible attraction on account of his happy smile in the midst of agonising suffering. Neither can yield anything to the other in grace and power, in divinity of heart and universality—But is it not true that the scrupulous historian of the Eternal Gospel, who writes at its dictation, always finds that at each of its new editions, the Gospel has grown with humanity?

[11] Vivekananda.

II

THE AWAKENING OF INDIA AFTER VIVEKANANDA, RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND AUROBINDO GHOSE

PERHAPS it may be useful for European readers to include a sketch of the progress of Indian thought during the period separating the death of Vivekananda from the advent of Gandhi as the moral dictator of his nation. It will then be easier to allot to each of the two leaders—the two "Judges of Israel"—his proper place and to form a better appreciation of the continuity of their action.

The Indian nationalist movement smouldered for a long time until Vivekananda's breath blew the ashes into flame, and erupted violently three years after his death in 1905.[1] The occasion was Lord Curzon's partition of the ancient Province of Bengal into two divisions, of which one, Western Bengal, was united to Assam.[2] This was a death blow aimed at the brain and the heart of India; for Bengal was her most keenly alive Province and the one from whose intelligence and attachment to her great past British supremacy had most to fear: and the whole of Bengal was effected. Before the measure was carried into effect the Bengal leaders on August 7, 1905, decided upon a general boycott of British goods, by way of protest. They were obeyed with enthusiasm. Amid cries of "Swadeshi," goods manufactured in India were opposed to English products, and it was further decided to found a national university.

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[1] Cf. the excellent work of one of the most intelligent and energetic leaders of India nationalism, who has just fallen a victim to his cause, Lajput Rai, Gandhi's friend, and one who honoured us also with his friendship—*Young India, the Nationalist Movement,* New York, Huebsch, 1917.

[2] Réné Grousset (*The Awakening of Asia,* Plon, 1924) clearly depicts the inauspicious part played by Lord Curzon. He it was who engineered the defeat of Russia by Japan, and Japan's victory had a tremendous repercussion throughout Asia. The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a second lesson of fate. It taught India terrorism.

Lord Curzon persisted in his course and on October 16, Bengal was divided.

It revolted. In a few months the face of the country was changed. Press, gallery, temples, theatres, literature, all became national. Everywhere the song was heard, that has since become so famous: "Bande mataram," (Hail, Motherland!) G. K. Gokhale, the only member of the Indian National Congress [3] except the President Dadabhai, to wield uncontested authority and whose influence upon Gandhi the latter has since respectfully acknowledged, organised The Servants of India Society "with the object of forming national missionaries for the service of India."

That was the historic moment, which has all too soon been allowed to fade into oblivion—of Rabindranath Tagore. It marked the pinnacle of his political action and of his popularity. He condemned the timidity of the Congress in "begging" for a Constitution from its English masters, boldly proclaimed Swaraj (Home Rule), ignored the British Government and strove to create a National Indian Government to take its place. An indefatigable orator, his wonderful eloquence was heard on all sides. Unfortunately too few echoes have reached our ears, for most of his speeches were extempore and few have been preserved.[4] He also wrote poems and national songs, which became immediately popular and were passed from mouth to mouth among the ardent youth of his countrymen. Lastly he sought to develop native industries and national education, and devoted all his personal resources to those objects. But when the independence movement took on a violent character, the poet left it and retired to Shantiniketan. He was "a lost leader"; and Indian nationalists have never forgiven him.

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[3] The National Indian Congress was assembled for the first time in 1885. Until about 1900 the moderate loyalists of the shade of Dadabhai Nacroji had had the ascendancy. During the following years the struggle became very tense between the radicals and the moderates. After December, 1907, the real leader of Indian opinion was the Radical Tilak (1855-1920) who appealed openly to national revolution. Some particulars of Dadabhai, Gokhale and Tilak may be found in my *Life of Mahatma Gandhi.*

Another personality—the greatest after him—thrown into the limelight by the independence movement, was his young friend, Aurobindo Ghose. He was the real intellectual heir of Vivekananda. He had just completed a brilliant education in England at Cambridge. Very learned, brought up in the classical culture of Europe, he was in the service of the Gaekwar of Baroda. He gave up his lucrative post and accepted for a very modest stipend the headship of the National College at Calcutta. His aim was to mould the character of Bengal youth by uniting education closely to the religion, politics and life of the nation. Under his inspiration, combined with that of Tagore, colleges and national schools rose against Lord Curzon. On all sides societies and gymnasiums were formed, where young Bengalis practised sports and fencing as an answer to the outrageous criticisms of English writers like Macaulay and Kipling. Numbers of newspapers in Bengal and English, inspired by Aurobindo and his friends, kept up the agitation.

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[4] They have been published in a pamphlet, *Greater India,* Ganesan, Madras.

As the boycott continued, Lord Curzon sent troops to Barisal in Western Bengal, but in spite of violent language India did not depart from passive resistance until 1907. The patriots allowed themselves to be prosecuted and imprisoned amid the applause of the nation but without coming to blows. The sudden deportation of Lajput Rai without any previous charge or condemnation in May set fire to the train. The first shot was fired in December 1907, the first bomb thrown in April or May 1908. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was attacked three times. The new Viceroy of India, Lord Minto, was attacked in November 1909 at Ahmedabad. The Political Secretary of Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, was killed in London. Strikes, sabotage, destruction of railways, pillaging of gunsmiths' shops, violence of all kinds increased. The British Government redoubled its repressive measures. Within a few months practically all the nationalist leaders had been thrown into prison, Aurobindo was tried for conspiracy, and Tilak condemned to six years deportation to Birmanie. 1908 and 1909 saw the fever at its height. The two subsequent years were marked by a deceptive calm; King George V visited India in December 1911, and appeared to agree to a re-establishment of the administrative unity of Bengal. But in December 1912 a new attempt, more serious than any of the former ones, greeted the first entry of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, into Delhi, the ancient and new capital of Bengal. Lord Hardinge was wounded, several of his suite were killed, and the murderer eluded all efforts to trace him, in spite of an enormous sum placed upon his head. 1912 and 1913 saw the revolutionary movements in full swing. The World War created a diversion and brought about a calculated but insincere rapprochement between the Government of the Empire and India. Under the growing influence of Gandhi, who had just returned from South Africa, India trusted its promises only too well and bitter disillusion was the result, as is well known. There followed the powerful Passive Resistance campaign inaugurated by Gandhi.

But according to the definite statement of Lajpat Rai, one of the chief leaders of the period before 1914, the elements of religious thought associated with and leavening the national Awakening were as follows:

Whatever the complexion of the nationalist parties—whether they supported terrorist means, or organised rebellion, or patient and constructive preparation for Indian Home Rule, they were all represented in the great religious groups; the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the disciples of Kali, Neo-Vedantists or Deists or Theists. All believed that their first duty of worship was to their Mother Country, the symbol of the Supreme Mother of the universe. And this is one of the most striking phenomena in the immense sea of nationalism, which flooded humanity during the ten years preceding the World War. There has been a childish desire to ascribe it to individual or local causes, when without a shadow of doubt for those capable of judging things in their entirety, it was a simultaneous feverish hour when the whole great tree of Humanity grew and expanded. But it is only natural that our limited intelligence in each country should have mistaken its cosmic significance and interpreted it each according to its own selfishly limited point of view.

It is not in the least surprising that in India the formidable flame of collective religious hallucination possessing her three hundred million men, should have immediately taken the form of the country. Mother India, sung in the Indian Marseillaise by Bankin Chandra, the Rouget de Lisle of Bengal, is the Mother, Kali, reincarnated in the body of the Nation.

It may easily be imagined that Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism, magnifying as it does the power of the Soul and its essential union with God, spread like burning alcohol in the veins of his intoxicated nation. "To these two classes," Lajpat Rai declared explicity, "to the Vedantists and to the worshippers of the Mother belong the majority of Bengal nationalists." The similarity of their belief, and their personal disinterestedness, had no check on the extreme violence of their political action. On the contrary! These sanctified their violent acts. It is always so when religion is united to politics. "All individual licence of thought and action was excused in the struggle, for the simple reason that the saviours of the nation were like fakir and sannyasins, above all law."

And is it to be wondered at that Vivekananda's name should have been mixed up with these political violences in all sincerity—despite his formal condemnation of politics—when Brahmos belonging to the Brahmo Samaj, the church of reason and moderate theism, were to be found in the ranks of the assassins!

The British Government was therefore not altogether wrong at that time to keep a close watch over religious organisations, although the official directors of those organisations were opposed to violence and worked for the slow and lawful evolution of the nation towards the common end: the independence of India.

. . . . .

It is an undoubted fact that the Neo-Vedantism of Vivekananda [5] materially contributed to this evolution. Lajput Rai attributes to him the honour of creating a new spirit of national tolerance, so that, since his death Indian patriots have gradually freed themselves from their ancient prejudices of caste and family.

The most noble representative of this great Neo-Vedantic spirit was—and still is—Aurobindo Ghose, the foremost of Indian thinkers, from whom intellectual and religious India is awaiting a new revelation.

At the period I am considering, he was the voice of Vivekananda risen from the pyre. He had the same conception of the identity of India's national ideal and her spiritual mission, and the same universal hope. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than a gross nationalism, whose aim was the purely political supremacy of his people confined within a proud and narrow "parochial life" (as Aurobindo expressed it). His nation was to be the servant of humanity; and the first duty of the nation was to work for the unity of humanity—not by force of arms, but by the force of the spirit. And the very essence of this force is spirituality in the form of energy, called religious,—but in as widely different a sense as possible from all confession in the profound Self and its reserves of eternity, the Atman. No nation has had such age-long knowledge and free access to it as India. Her real mission then should be to lead the rest of humanity to it.

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[5] We have seen above that it was in his capacity of patriot that Vivekananda influenced Gandhi (who is moreover no metaphysician and has little curiosity about mental research). When from the balcony of Belur, Gandhi rendered public homage to his great forerunner, his actual words were that "the reading of Vivekananda's books had increased his patriotism." (Communicated by the Ramakrishna Mission.)

"An awakening of the real Self of a nation is the condition of national greatness. The supreme Indian idea of the Unity of all men in God, and the realisation of this idea, outwardly and inwardly, in social relations and in the structure of society, are destined to govern all progress of the human kind. India can, if she wishes, lead the world."

Such language sounds strangely different from that of our European politicians. But is it really so? Does it not differ—(I am speaking of those loyal souls in the West who are working for the co-operation of all the forces of civilisation)—only in that it has taken one step further in its intensity of faith in the common cause; the United States of humanity? Our European thinkers are too timid to dare to assert the God hidden in man, the Eternal who is the support and living reason for the very existence of Humanity, an unstable and hollow entity without Him.

The old political leader of the Bengal revolt, who is now one of the greatest thinkers of modern India, has realised the most complete synthesis achieved up to the present between the genius of the West and of the East. In 1910 he retired from politics [6]—although he has not severed his connection with the political freedom of his country; but he feels that she is certain to obtain it and therefore has no further use for him. He believes that he serves India better by turning his energies to a deepening of her wisdom and science, and he has devoted the concentration of his vast mind to reconquering the use of the rusty "key" of the spirit, which is destined according to his belief, to open to humanity new fields of knowledge and power.[7] He was brought up on modern science and the wisdom of the Hindu Scriptures—he is their daring interpreter in India today—he speaks and writes Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, English, French and German, and at this very moment he is engaged in bringing a new Message to his people, the result of eighteen years meditation. He is seeking to harmonise the spiritual strivings of India and the activities of the West, and in pursuance of that aim he is training all the forces of the spirit towards an ascendancy of action. The West with its customary

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[6] From his retirement since 1910 at Pondicherry, whither he had to escape the political persecution of England, Aurobindo Ghose published during the World War a Review of the greatest importance, (unfortunately difficult to procure today)—*Arya,* a Review of Philosophical Synthesis. A French edition of the first year appeared (from August 15, 1914), under the collaboration

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of Paul and Mirra Richard. In it Aurobindo Ghose published his chief works: *The Divine Life* and *The Synthesis of the Yogas.* (I note in passing that this last work rests from first to last on Vivekananda's authority.) At the same time he gave learned and original interpretations of the Hindu Scriptures, the discussion of which we must leave to Sanskrit scholars, while at the same time he bore unequivocal witness to their philosophic depth and fascination: *The Secret of the Veda.* Two volumes of his *Essays on the Gita* have just appeared (1928) and have aroused animated discussion in India.

[7] "India possesses in its past, a little rusty and out of use, the key to the progress of humanity. It is to this side that I am now turning my energies, rather than towards mediocre politics. Hence the reason for my withdrawal. I believe in the necessity for tapasya (a life of meditation and concentration) in silence for education and self-knowledge and for the unloosing of spiritual energies. Our ancestors used these means under different forms; for they are the best for becoming an efficient worker in the great hours of the world." (Interview at Madras, 1917.)

opinion of the East as passive, static, ataraxic, will be astonished to see in a little while an India who will outstrip her in the madness of progress and upward advance. If, like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Ghose she withdraws herself for a space into the profundities of thought, it is only to gain fresh impetus for the next forward leap. An Aurobindo Ghose is fired with an unparalleled faith in the limitless powers of the soul and of human progress. His acceptation of the material and scientific conquests of Europe is complete, but he regards them not as the end but as the beginning; he wishes to see India outstrip the field by the use of the same methods.[8] For he believes that "humanity is on the point of enlarging its domain by new knowledge, new powers, new capacities, such as will create a revolution in human life as great as did the physical sciences of the XIXth century."

This is to be achieved by the methodical and deliberate incorporation of intuition in integral science as the enlightener and quartermaster of the mind, to which logical reason acts as the rank and file that makes victory certain. There will no longer be a break in the continuity between the divine Unity and aspiring man! The question of renouncing illusory Nature to be free in God will no longer exist. Complete freedom will be attained by a joyful acceptation, espousal, and subjugation of integral Nature. There will be no renunciation, no constriction. With all our energies in their infinite multiplicity and with open eyes we shall embrace life as a whole, cosmic Joy, from the heart of the achieved Unity of the serene and unattached Being. God works in and through man, and in Him liberated men become body and soul "canals of action in this world." [9]

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[8] "The past ought to be sacred to us, but the future still more so . . . The thought of India must come forth from the school of philosophy and renew contact with life. The spirituality of India, emerging from the cave and the temple, must adapt itself to new forms and set its hand to the world."—There follows the phrase quoted above about the belief in the imminent enlargement of the field of humanity, in the next revolution to be accomplished in human Life, and the "rusty key" of India, which is to open the door to the new progress. *(ibid.)*

Hence the most complete knowledge is being fused to the most intense action by religious, wise and heroic India now in process of being resuscitated. The last of the great Rishis holds in his outstretched hands the bow of Creative Impulse. It is an uninterrupted tide flowing from the most distant yesterdays to the most distant tomorrows. The whole spiritual life of history is one: *The One that advances. . . .*

"Usha (the Dawn) follows to the goal of those that are passing on beyond. She is the first in the eternal succession of the dawns that are coming—Usha widens, bringing out that which lives, awakening that which was dead. . . . What scope is hers when she harmonises with the dawns that shone out before those that now must shine! She desires the ancient mornings and fulfils their light; projecting forwards her illumination she enters into communion with the rest that are to come." [10]

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[9] *The Synthesis of the Yogas.* (*Arya Review,* 15 December, 1914.) Aurobindo depended largely on this character of action—in his new commentaries on the Gita. (*Essays on the Gita,* 3 Vol., 1921-1928, Calcutta.)

[10] Quotation from the *Kutsa Angirasa Rig-Veda,* inscribed by Aurobindo Ghose in French as the foreword of one of his chief works: *The Divine Life,* (First number of the *Arya Review,* 15 August, 1914).

We are beginning to perceive the meaning of the prodigious curve of the human Spirit throughout three centuries—from the *Aufklärung* of the XVIIIth century—its emancipation from the too narrow confines of ancient classical synthesis by the weapon of negative and revolutionary critical rationalism,—the sublime flight of experimental and positive science in the XIXth century with its colossal hopes and fabulous promises—its partial bankruptcy at the end of the XIXth century—the seismic upheavals of the beginning of the XXth century, shaking the whole edifice of the spirit to its foundations—the instability of scientific laws that evolve and vary like humanity itself, the entry into play of Relativity, the invasion of the Subconscious, the threat to ancient rationalism and its transition from an attitude of attack to one of defence, all making it impossible for the ancient Faiths to discover their old foundations on the ground so undermined by reason, in order to begin rebuilding. . . .

And lo! for the benefit of mankind as a whole comes the promise of an age of new synthesis, where a new and larger rationalism, although aware of its limitations, will be allied to a new Science of intuition established on a surer basis. The combined efforts of the East and the West will create a new order of freer and more universal thought. And, as is always the way in times of plenty, the immediate result of this inner order will be an afflux of power and audacious confidence, a flame of action inspiring and nourishing the spirit, a renewal of individual and social life. . . .

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held
high;
Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth; . . .
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action. . . ."[11]

There we will walk in the midst of tempests guided by our stars. . . .

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[11] Rabindranath Tagore: *Gitanjali.*

THE END

APPENDICES TO THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL OF VIVEKANANDA

Note I

Concerning Mystic Introversion and Its Scientific Value for the Knowledge of the Real

The intuitive workings of the "religious" spirit—in the wide sense in which I have consistently used the word—have been insufficiently studied by modern psychological science in the West and too often by observers, who are themselves lacking in every kind of "religious" inclination and so are ill equipped for its study and involuntarily prone to depreciate an inner sense they do not themselves possess.[1]

One of the best works devoted to this important subject is M. Ferdinand Morel's Essay on *Mystic Introversion.*[2] It is firmly founded on the principles and methods of pathological psycho-physiology and on the psycho-analysis of Freud, Janet, Jung, Bleuler, etc., and it handles the psychological study of several representative types of Hellenic-Christian mysticism with scrupulous care. His analysis of the Pseudo-Denis is particularly interesting;[3] and his description of him is on the whole correct in spite of the fact that the author does not manage to free himself from his preconceived theories drawn from the scientific pathology of his age in his appreciation of the works of Denis and the conclusions he draws from them.

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[1] I except from this criticism several beautiful and recent essays rehabilitating intuition on scientific grounds—more or less the offspring of the dynamic "Impetus" of Bergson—and the penetrating analysis of Edouard le Roy—also of the first order.

[2] *Essai sur l'Introversion mystique; étude psychologique de Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et de quelques autres cas de mysticism,* Geneva, Kundig, 1918, in 80, 338 p.

As far as the author is aware the term "introversion" was used for the first time in the sense of scientific psychology by Dr. C. G. Jung of Zurich.

Without being able within the limits of this note to enter into a close discussion such as his theses deserve, I should like, however briefly, to point out their weak spots as I see them and the truer interpretation that ought to be put upon them.

Almost all psychologists are possessed by the theory[4] of Regression, which appears to have been started by Th. Ribot. It is undoubtedly a true one within the limited bounds of his psycho-pathological studies on functional disorganisation, but it has been erroneously extended to the whole realm of the mind, whether abnormal or normal.

Ribot laid down that "the psychological functions most rapidly attacked by disease were the most recently constituted ones, the last in point of time in the development of the individual (ontogenesis), and then reproduced on a general scale in the evolution of the species (phylogenesis)." Janet, Freud, and their followers have applied this statement to all the nervous affections, and from them to all the activities of the mind. From this it is for them only a step—for us a false step, to the conclusion that the most recently effected operations and the most rapidly worn out are the highest in hierarchy, and that a return to the others is a retrogression in a backward sense, a fall of the mind.

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[3] The second part of the work, devoted to "several other cases of mysticism" is unfortunately very inferior—Eastern mysticism ("forty centuries of Introversion" as the author says) is studied in a few pages from third hand information—and Christian mysticism in the West is summarised into a quite arbitrary and inadequate choice of types, including a number of definitely diseased people like Madame Guyon and Antoinette Bourignon, and superior and complete personalities like St. Bernard and François de Sales. They are, moreover, all mutilated by a very distorted representation: for the mighty elements of energy and social action which in the case of these great men were closely bound up with mystic contemplation, are taken out of the picture.

[4] With one notable exception, the fine school of educational psychology at Geneva, grouped round the Institute J. J. Rousseau and the International Bureau of Education. One of the chiefs of this group, Ch. Baudouin, has in these very last months protested against the confusion caused by the term *regression,* attached indiscriminately to all the phenomena of recoil psychologically, so varied and sometimes so different. (Cf. *Journal of Psychology,* Paris, November, December, 1928.)

At the outset let us determine what is meant by "the supreme function" of the mind. It is what Janet calls "the function of the real," and he defines it as awareness of the present, of present action, the enjoyment of the present. He places "disinterested action and thought," which does not keep an exact account of present reality, on a lower level,—then imaginary representation at the bottom of the scale, that is to say the whole world of imagination and fancy. Freud with his customary energy, asserts that reverie and all that emerges from it, is nothing but the debris of the first stage of evolution. And they all agree in opposing, like Bleuler, a "function of the unreal" akin to pure thought, to the so-called "function of the real," which they would term "the fine point of the soul," (to misuse the famous phrase of François de Sales by applying it—what irony!—to the opposite extreme).[5]

Such a classification, which ascribes the highest rank to "interested" action and the lowest rank to concentration of thought, seems to me to be self convicted in the light of simple practical and moral common sense. And this depreciation of the most indispensable operation of the active mind: the withdrawal into oneself, to dream, to imagine, to reason, is in danger of becoming a pathological aberration. The irreverent observer is tempted to say: "Physician, heal thyself!"

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[5] With quite unconscious irony a great "introvert" like Plotinus, sincerely pities the "extraverts" the "wanderers outside themselves" (*Enn.* IV. III. 17), for they seem to him to have lost the "function of the real."

It seems to me that the transcendant value attributed by science to the idea of evolution should be taken with a pinch of salt. The admission of its indestructibility and universality without any exception, is in fact nothing more than the declaration of a continuous series (or sometimes discontinuous) of modifications and of differentiations in living matter. This biological process is not worthy to be elevated into a dogma, forcing us to see far above and beyond us, suspended to some vague "greasy pole,"[6] some equally vague mysterious supreme "Realisation" of the living being—not much less supernatural than the "Realisation" below and behind us (or in the depths) presupposed by religion in its various myths of primitive Eden. Eventually, vital evolution would culminate in the inevitable extinction of the species by a process of exhaustion. How can we decide the exact moment when the path begins to go down on the further side instead of going up? There are as many reasons for believing that the most important of the diverse operations and functions of the mind are those which disappear last: for they are the very foundations of Being—and that the part so easily destroyed belongs to a superficial level of existence.

"A great aesthete, who is at the same time a scientist and a creative artist—a complete man endowed with both reason and intuition, Edouard Monod-Herzen, has thus expressed it:

'The effects of the Cosmos antecedent to a given individual, whose substance still bears their trace, are to be distinguished from the contemporary effects which set their mark upon him each day. The first are his own inner property, and constitute his heredity. The second are his acquired property, and constitute his adaptation.' "

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[6] The "greasy pole" is a popular game in French country fairs. Competitors try to climb a tall pole covered with slippery soap for a prize fastened to the top of it.

In what way then are his "acquired properties" superior in hierarchical order to his "Innate possessions"? They are only so in point of time. And, continues E. Monod-Herzen, "the actual condition of the individual results from a combination of the two groups of possessions." [7]

Why should they be dissociated? If it is to meet the exigences of scientific investigation, it is not superfluous to remark that by its very definition primitive or "innate possessions" accommodate themselves better to such dissociation than "acquired possessions"—for the simple reason that the latter are posterior and necessarily presuppose what went before them.

As Ch. Baudouin, when he was trying to correct the deprecatory tendencies of psycho-analysis with regard to psychological "phenomena of recoil," wrote on the subject of evolution:

"Evolution is not conceived as going from the reflex to instinct, from instinct to the higher psychological life, without appealing to successive inhibitions and their resultant introversions. At each step new inhibitions must intervene to prevent energy from immediately discharging itself in motive channels together with introversions, inward storings of energy until little by little thought is substituted for the inhibited action. . . . Thought (as John Dewey has shown) may be regarded as the result of suspended action, which the subject does not allow to proceed to its full realisation. Our reasonings are attempts in effigy. . . . It would therefore be a pity to confound introversion with open retrogression, since the latter marks a step backwards in the line of evolution"—(and I would add that it is a retreat "without any idea of regaining lost ground and advancing again")—"while introversion is the indispensable condition of evolution and if it is a recoil, it is one of those recoils that render a forward thrust possible." [8]

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[7] *Science et Esthétique: Principes de morphologie générale,* 1917, Paris, Gauthier-Villars (Vol. II. p. 6, Chapter 5 and 42: *Living Matter.*)

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But let us come frankly to the case of great introversion, no longer in the mitigated form of normal thought —but complete, absolute, unmitigated, as we have been studying it in these volumes in the case of the highest mystics.

To pathological psychology—(and M. Ferdinard Morel accepts these conclusions) [9] it is a return to a primary stage, to a intra-uterine state. And the symbolic words used to explain absorption in the Unity by the masters of mysticism, whether of India or of Alexandria, or the Areopagite or the two XIVth century whirlwinds of the soul, Eckhart and Tauler: *"Grund, Urgrund, Boden, Wurzel, Wesen ohne Wesen, Indefinite suressentielle . . .* etc." add weight to this assumption, no less than the curious instinct which has given birth in Ramakrishna's India to the passionate worship of "the Mother," and in Christianity to that of the "Virgin Mother."

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[8] *op. cit.* p. 808-809.

This is just what I have been led to observe and what I have noted in the last chapter of this volume on "The Awakening of India"; "If the mystic thought of contemporary India seems to us, in the case of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghose, to recoil at times into the recesses of primitive evolution, it is only to collect itself for a further leap forward."

[9] The deepseated narcissism of honest introversion is a profound retrogression into the bosom of the mother; thus the individual epitomises the whole development of the race.

It must be granted that we are impartial.[10]

Is it then only a similar replunging of conscious thought into the distant abysses of prenatal life? For a careful study of mysticism establishes clearly that consciousness exists undimmed in this gigantic ascent backwards up the ladder of the past, compared to which Well's "Time Machine" is mere child's play: and M. F. Morel returns to it on several occasions.

"In the most complete introversion (that of Denis the Areopagite there is no loss of consciousness, but a displacement of attention. . . . Ecstatic experiences remain deeply engraven upon those who experience them, and this would not be the case if they were simply empty or void of meaning. . . . Consciousness is in fact something intensely mobile. When the exterior world has disappeared, the circle of consciousness contracts and seems to withdraw entirely into some unknown and usually ignored cortical centre. Consciousness seems to gather itself together, to confine itself within some unknown psychic pineal gland and to withdraw into a kind of centre wherein all organic functions and all psychic forces meet, and there it enjoys unity . . . nothing else." [11]

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[10] As a starting point. But the great analists of this intuitive "ebbing" such as Ed. le Roy, show wherein the final "simplicity" to which they have already attained, differs from the "simplicity anterior to the discursive intricacy, belonging solely to the confused preintuition of a child." It is "a rich and luminous simplicity, which achieves the dispersion of analysis by surpassing and overcoming it. It alone is the fruit of true intuition, the state of inner freedom, of fusion of the pacified soul with (the Being) non-passive peace, which is action at its highest power. . . ."

"The *Discipline of Intuition.*" Review *"Vers l'Unite,"* 1925, No. 35-36.

There is not one of these sayings to which Vivekananda would not have subscribed.

[11] E. Morel: *op. cit.* p. 112.

Cf. my first Note in the first volume of this work on the *Physiology of Indian Asceticism,* the yogic descriptions of the ascent of the *Koundalini Shakti* up to the "lotus with the thousand petals," in the cerebral hemispheres.

"Nothing else?"—What more do you want! There, according to your own admission you have an instrument for penetrating to the depths of functional consciousness, of subliminal life—and yet you do not use it in order to complete your knowledge of the whole activity of the mind. You, doctors of the Unconscious, instead of making yourselves citizens of this boundless empire and possessing yourselves of it, do you ever enter it except as foreigners, imbued with the preconceived idea of the superiority of your own country and incapable of ridding yourselves of the need, which itself deforms your vision of reducing whatever you catch a glimpse of in this unknown world to the measure of the one already familiar to you?

Think of the extraordinary interest of these striking descriptions—a succession of Indian, Alexandrine and Christian mystics of all sects without mutual knowledge of each other have all with the same clarity gone through the same experiences—the triple movement of thought,[12] and especially the "circular movement," which they have tested thoroughly and "which represents exactly the psychic movement of pure and simple introversion, withdrawing itself from the periphery and collecting itself towards the centre"—the mighty Stygian river that goes seven times round the Being, the round dance with its powerful attraction towards the centre, the centripetal force of the inner soul corresponding to that exercised in the exterior universe by universal gravitation! Is it a slight thing to be able by means of direct perception to realize the great cosmic laws and the forces which govern the universe controlled by our senses?

If a scientist maintains that such knowledge of psychic profundities teaches us nothing about exterior realities, he really, though perhaps unwittingly, is obeying a prejudice of proud incomprehension as one-eyed as that of those religious spiritualists who set up an insurmountable barrier between spirit and matter. What is the "function of the real" of which scientific psychology claims to be the standard-bearer? And what is the "real"? Is it what can be observed by extraspection or by introspection like that of St. John in Raphael's *Discussion,*[13] who gazes into the depths with his closed eyes? Is it "the movement in a straight line" or "in spirals" or "in a circle?" There are not two realities. That which exists in one exists equally in the other.[14] The laws of the inner psychic substance are of necessity the same as those of outside reality. And if you succeed in reading one properly, the chances are that you will find the confirmation (if not, the presentiment) of what you have read or will read in the other. Laotse's deep thought that "a wheel is made up of thirty perceptible spokes, but it is because of the central non-perceptible void of the neve that it turns," leads me to think of the latest hypotheses of astronomical science, which claim to have discovered gulfs of cosmic emptiness to be the homes of the various universes. . . . Do you suppose that Laotse would ever have been able to imagine such a thought if it had not secretly contained the form of the universal cosmic Substance and its forgotten laws? Pure hypothesis do you say? Neither more nor less so than your most firmly established fruitful scientific hypotheses. And quite logically probable: for it satisfies the strict economy of the laws of the universe and partakes of their natural harmony.

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[12] The three movements:—"Circular," when the thought turns entirely towards itself:—"spiral" when it reflects and reasons in a discursive fashion:—"in a straight line," when it is directed towards the exterior. (Cf. Poltinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Hermias, Denis the Areopagite, etc, and F. Morel's analysis of them.)

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[13] An allusion to Raphael's fresco of the Holy Sacrament in the Vatican known as the *Dispute* (or the Discussion).

[14] I am glad to find myself here in accord with the thought of one of the masters of the "new Education," Dr. Adolphe Ferrière, the founder-president of the International Bureau of Education in his monumental work: *Spiritual Progress* (Vol. I of *Constructive Education,* 1927, Geneva.)

"If individual reasons are reducible as to a single common denominator, to Reason conceived as super-individual and impersonal . . . it is because at bottom each mind and what it is convenient to call nature, share the same reality, have the same origin are the issue of the same cosmic Energy." (p. 45).

If then introspection makes it possible to go back, I do not say to the origin but nearer to the origin, the vital source that is one of the forms of universal Energy, why ignore it?

(Cf. in the same work of Dr. A. Ferrière chapter III, I, *"The Human Microcosm replies to the Macrocosm,"*—its very title and basic idea correspond to the Vedantic conception explained by Vivekananda in several of the most famous lectures of his *Jnana-yoga*).

But if this is true the judicious use of deep introversion opens to the scientist a mine of unexplored resources: for it constitutes a new method of experiment, having the advantage that the observer identifies himself with the object observed. . . . *ὄχις ὸρῶσα* The Plotinian identity of the seer and the thing seen.[15]

The clear intuition of Plotinus, who united in himself the spirit of Greek observation and Eastern introspection has thus described the operation:

"It may happen that the soul possesses a thing without being aware of it;[16] it therefore possesses it better than if it were aware of it; in fact when it is aware of it, it possesses it as a thing that is alien to it; when on the contrary it is not aware of it, it is a real possession." [17]

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[15] As a matter of fact every great scientific experimenter identifies himself more or less with the object of his experiment. It is an attribute of all passion, whatever its object, whether carnal or intellectual, that it embraces the object, and tends to infuse itself into it. The great physicist biologist, J. Ch. Bose, has told me that he feels himself becoming one with the plants that he is observing and that now, before he begins an experiment, he pre-conceives their reactions within himself, and with poets and artists this is still more the case. I refer my reader to the chapter in this book on Walt Whitman.

[16] The word "knowledge" stands here for "discursive intellectual knowledge." It is quite evident that a superior knowledge takes its place:—this knowledge may be called "functional," as in M. F. Morel, or "perfect reason" as in Plotinus who adds this comment: "A man only considers discursively that which he does not yet

And that is exactly the idea that one of the greatest thinkers of modern India, Aurobindo Ghose, is trying to incorporate in science—as I have shown in the last chapter of this present volume—he wishes to reintegrate generative intuition in its legitimate place as advance guard of the army of the spirit marching forward to the scientific conquest of the universe.

Part of this great effort is rejected with the disdainful gesture of the exclusive rationalists, and particularly of psycho-pathologists, who throw discredit on "the standard of intellectual satisfaction" or, as the great Freud said

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possess . . . Perfect reason no longer seeks; it rests upon the evidence of that with which it is filled." (*Enn.* III, VIII, (2) (5).)

[17] *Enn.* LV. IV. (4).

Cf. the analysis of intuitive thought by my contemporary French master Edouard le Roy:

"It is essential that the mind . . . should free itself from all disuniting egoism, and be led to a 'state of docility' analagous to the purification of the conscience by ascetics, an attitude of generosity resembling the workings of love that divines and understands because it forgets itself, because it accepts the effort of the necessary transformations in order to lose itself in its object and to attain perfect objectivity . . . " etc.

The *Discipline of Intuition,* Review *Vers l'Unite,* 1925, No. 35-36.

And in conclusion:

"The three stages in the course of intuitive thought are:

1. The 'ascese' preparatory to the renunciation of the usual forms of speech;

2. The final union of the spirit with that which started as a separate object from it;

3. The simplicity of knowledge or rather of perception when it has been rediscovered after passing through the dispersion of analysis, and going beyond and below it, but a simplicity which is the result of wealth and not poverty." *(ibid.)* Are there not close analogies here to the Jnana-Yoga of India? (Cf. *Intuitive Thought* by the same author E. le Roy, 1925.)

with austere scorn, on "the principle of pleasure," which in his eyes is that of "the unsuitable," those who reject it are far less the servants of the "real," as they imagine themselves to be, than of a proud and Puritanical faith, whose prejudices they no longer see because those prejudices have become second nature. There is no normal reason why, on the plausible hypothesis of a unity of substance and cosmic laws, the conquest, the full perception, and the *"fruitio"* by the mind of the logical ordering of the universe should not be accompanied by a feeling of soverign well-being. And it would be strange if mental joy were a sign of error. The mistrust shown by some masters of psychoanalysis for the free natural play of the mind, rejoicing in its own possession—the stigma they imprint upon it of "narcissism" and "autoerotism" [18]—betray all unconsciously a kind of perverted ascetism and religious renunciation.

They are, it is true, quite right to denounce the dangers of introversion, and in so doing no one will contradict them. But every experiment has its own dangers for the mind. Sense and reason itself are dangerous instruments and have to be constantly supervised; and no close scientific observation is carried out on a *tabula rasa.* Whatever it is doing, the eye interprets before it has seen;[19] and in the case of P. Lowell, the astronomer, he has never ceased to see upon the surface of Mars the canals his own eyes have put there. . . . By all means let us continue to doubt, even after having proof! My attitude is always one of profound Doubt, which is hidden in my cave like a strong, bitter but healthgiving tonic, for the use of the strong.

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[18] That is to say: the state of Narcissus who was in love with himself.

[19] Cf. the definition of scientific hypothesis by J. Perrin one of the intuitive savants of today as "a form of intuitive intelligence . . . to divine the existence or the essential faculties of objects which are still beyond our consciousness, to explain the complicated visible by the simple invisible." (*The Atoms,* 1912.)

But in the world of the "real"—that is to say, of the "relative"—where we must needs labour and build our dwelling places, I maintain that the principle whereby we ought to attempt to satisfy the operations of the mind is that of proportion, of equilibrium between the diverse forces of the mind. All tendency to inclusiveness is dangerous and defective. Man has different and complementary means of knowledge at his disposal.[20] If it is necessary to divide them in order to probe with them into the depths of an object of study, synthesis must always be re-established afterwards. Strong personalities accomplish this by instinct. A great "introvert" will know how to be a great "extravert" at the same time. Here the example of Vivekananda seems to me to be conclusive.[21] Interiorisation has never led in principle to diminution of action. The hypotheses based upon the supposed social passivity of mystic India are entirely erroneous: here what is nothing but *Ersatz* is taken for the cause. The physical and moral devitalisation of India during several centuries is due to quite different factors of climate and social economy. But we shall see with our own eyes that her introversion, where the fires of her threatened life have taken refuge, is the principle of her national resurrection.[22]

[20] In the study by Charles Baudouin already quoted, see his analysis of complementary instincts (the combative instinct and the instinct of withdrawal; activity, passivity) and their rythmic connection. In the cases we are considering the tendencies of recoil and of introversion are complementary to forward impulse and extraversion. Together they form a system in unstable equilibrium which can always be tipped to one side or the other.

[21] Is it necessary to remind the reader that his example is not in the least unique? The genius for action shown by the greatest of mystic Christian introverts: St. Bernard, St. Theresa, St. Ignace, is well known.

[22] I refer the reader to the last chapter in this volume on the Awakening of India—and in the first volume to the pages devoted to Dayananda and the Arya Samaj.

And it will shortly appear how potent a brazier of action is this Atman, over which she has brooded for several thousand years. I advise the "extravert" peoples of the West to rediscover in the depths of themselves the same sources of active and creative "introversion." If they fail, there is not much hope for the future. Their gigantic technical knowledge, far from being a source of protection, will bring about their annihilation.

But I am not anxious. The same sources sleep in the depths of the soul of the West. At the last hour but one they will spring up anew.

April, 1929.

Note II

On the Hellenic-Christian Mysticism of the First Centuries and its Relationship to Hindu Mysticism: Plotinus of Alexandria and Denis the Areopagite

It is one of my chief desires to see Chairs of Comparative Eastern and Western Metaphysics and Mysticism founded in India and Europe. The two should be mutually complementary, for their work is really essential if the human spirit is to learn to know itself in its entirety. Its object would not be a kind of puerile steeplechase seeking to establish the primitive chronology of each group of thought. Such research would be meaningless: religious historians who try only to discover the intellectual interdependence of systems forget the vital point: the knowledge that religions are not ordinary matters of intellectual dialectic, but facts of experience, and that although reason steps in afterwards to construct systems upon these facts, they would not hold good for an hour if they were not based upon the solid foundation of experience. Hence the facts must first be discovered and studied. I do not know whether any modern psycho-physiologist, armed with all the latest instruments of the new sciences of the soul will be able to attain to a full knowledge of them one day,[1] but I am willing to believe it. In the meanwhile such simple observation as we have at our present disposal leads us to recognise the existence of *the same religious facts* as the foundations of all the great organised religions, spread over the face of the earth during the march of the centuries. At the same time it is impossible to attribute to the mutual actions and reactions of peoples any appreciable effect on their productions: for their uprising is spontaneous, it grows from the soil under certain influences in the life of humanity almost "seasonal" in their recurrence, like the grain that springs up in natural life with the return of spring.

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[1] One of the first to attempt an objective study of them was William James in his famous book on *Religious Experience*, an Essay of Descriptive Psychology, which appeared in New York in 1902 under the title: *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

The first result of an objective study of Comparative Metaphysics and Mysticism would be to demonstrate the

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It is very remarkable that by the scrupulous honesty of his intellect alone, this man, though not in the least gifted for the attainment of subliminal reality, as he himself frankly declared: "My temperament prohibited me from almost all mystic experience"—should have arrived at the positive statement of the objective existence of those very realities and should have commended them to the respect of scientists. To his efforts were added those of the learned Frederick W. H. Myers, who in 1886 discovered "the subliminal consciousness", a theory propounded in a posthumous work, later than that of William James: *Human Personality.* (Myers, like James, had known Vivekananda personally)—The most interesting part of James's book appears to be the collection of mystic witness coming from his Western contemporaries, chiefly from laymen who were strangers to religious or metaphysical speculation, so that they did not try to attach to it the facts of inner experience, often very striking, which had come to them unawares like the fall of a thunderbolt (Tennyson, Ch. Kingsley, J. A. Symonds, Dr. R. M. Bucke, etc.) all unknowingly, they realised states identical with the characteristic Samadhis of India. Others whose natural intelligence cut them off from mysticism, found themselves led as was James himself, by artificial means (chloroform, ether, etc.) to an astounding intuition of the absolute Unity where all contraries are dissolved:—a conception quite outside their ordinary ken. And with the intellectual lucidity of the West, these "amateurs" in ecstasy have given perfect descriptions of it. The hypothetical conclusions, to which James arrived, testify to a rare mental freedom. Certain of them are the same as Vivekananda's and Gandhi's, for example that religions are necessarily diverse, and that their "complete meaning can only be deciphered by their universal collaboration." Others curiously enough admit a "polytheism of the Ego."

universality and perennial occurrence of the great facts of religious experience, their close resemblance under the diverse costumes of race and time, attesting to the persistent unity of the human spirit—or rather, for it goes deeper than the spirit, which itself is obliged to delve for it—the identity of the materials constituting humanity.[2] But before entering into any discussion of the comparative value of ideological structures erected by religion and metaphysics in India and Alexandria (to illustrate the point from the case with which we are dealing here) it is necessary to establish the fact that at bottom the illuminations of Philo, the great ecstasies of Plotinus and Porphyry, so similar to the samadhis of Indian yogins, were identical experiences. Hence we must not use the term Christianity to the exclusion of the other thousands of mystic experiences, on whose basis it was built up—not in one feverish birth, but by a series of births throughout the centuries, fresh shoots sprouting from the ancient tree with each spring.

And that is, indeed, the heart of the problem. If these great experiences have once been established, compared and classified, comparative Mysticism would then—and only then—have the right to pass on to a study of systems. Systems exist solely to provide the mind with a means for registering the results of enlightenment and to classify in one complete and coordinated whole the claims of the senses, reason and intuition—(by whatever name we may choose to call the eighth sense or the second reason, which those who have experienced it call the first). Systems then are a continually renewed effort to bring about the synthesis of what a man, a race or an epoch has *experienced* (by the use of all the various instruments at the disposal of knowledge). And of necessity the particular temperament of that man, race, or epoch is always reflected in each system.

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[2] That is also the conclusion to which one of the exceptionally religious men of the West has reached after a careful and scientific study of the comparative Mysticism of India and Europe: Professor Rudolf Otto of Marburg. Having lived for fourteen years in India and Japan he has devoted a whole series of remarkable works to Asiatic mysticism. The most important for our purpose is:—*West-oestliche Mystik-Vergleich und Unterschiedung zur Wesensdeutung* (1926, Gotha, Leopold Klotzverlag) which takes as types the two mystics, Sankara and Meister Eckhart.

His main thesis establishes the extraordinary similarity of the *Urmotiven* (the fundamental motives) of humanity's spiritual experience, exclusive of race, age or climate. Mysticism is always and everywhere the same. And the profound unity of the human spirit is a fact. Naturally this does not exclude variations between different mystic personalities. But such variations are not the result of race, age or country. They may be found side by side in the same surroundings.

Moreover, it is intensely interesting that all kinds of minds morally akin, but scattered through space and time in different countries and different ages, know that the varieties of their own thought, produced by all these different temperaments are simultaneously the limits and the womb of force. India and Europe are equally concerned to enrich themselves by a knowledge of all the forms developed by this same mental or vital power, a theme upon which each of their diverse races, epochs and cultures has embroidered its own variations.

Hence, to return to the subject that is occupying us here, I do not believe modern Indian metaphysics can remain any longer in ignorance of Alexandrine and Christian Mysticism—any more than our Western intellectuals can be allowed in future to stop short their study of the "Divine Infinity" [3] at the borders of Greece. When two types of humanity as magnificent as India and Greece have dealt with the same subject, it is obvious that each will have enriched it with its own particular splendours, and that the double masterpiece will harmonize with the new spirit of universal humanity we are seeking to establish.

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[3] This is the title of an excellent Doctorate thesis, written by Henri Guyot: *The Divine Infinity from Philo the Jew to Plotinus, with an introduction on the same subject on Greek philosophy before Plato*. Paris, Alcan, 1906. I have made profitable use of it.

In these pages I can do no more than point out the way to the intelligence of my readers, and here in addressing myself especially to the Vedantists of India, I want to give them at least a glimpse of the characteristics wherein Mediterranean Mysticism and their own are alike and wherein they differ. I shall particularly insist on the chief monument of early Christian Mysticism—the work of the Pseudo-Denis—because as it came from the East it possessed already the characteristics which it was to impose upon the metaphysical physiognomy of the West throughout six centuries of Christianity.

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It is generally conceded that the Greek spirit, while eminently endowed for art and science, was almost a closed book to the idea of Infinity, and that it only accepted the idea with mistrust. Although the Infinite is included in principle by Anaximander and Anaxagoras, they give it a material character and stamp it with the imprint of scientific instinct. Plato, who in his Republic touched in passing on the conception of the Idea of Good, superior to being, essence and intelligence, did not dwell upon it and seemed to regard it merely as an idea of perfection and not of infinity. To Aristotle, the infinite was imperfect. To the Stoics, it was unreal.[4]

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[4] It must not be forgotten that during the Alexandrine epoch there was an intimate connection between India and the Hellenic West. But the history of thought has not taken it into account and even at the present time is very insufficiently aware of it. Several years ago in India a society was formed to study the radiations of "greater India" and its forgotten Empire in the past. (*The Greater India Society*, President, Prof. Jadunath Sarkar, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta; Hon-

It is not until we reach the first century that we find Philo, a Jew of Alexandria, who had been brought up in Greek thought, embracing it with the notion of Infinity derived from his people, and attempting to hold the balance between the two currents. The balance, however, remained an unstable one, and all through his life Philo oscillated between the two temperaments. In spite of the fact that He was indeterminate, the God of the Jews kept a very strong personal flavour, of which Philo's nostrils could not rid themselves. On the other hand his Greek education allowed him to analyse with rationalist precision those obscure powers of his prophetic people, that had brought them into contact with God. His theory of ecstasy, first by withdrawal into oneself, then by the flight of the ego and the total negation of the senses, reason and being itself, so that they might be identified with the One, is, in the main, precisely the same as that always practised by the Indian in the East. Philo eventually sketches an attempt to attach the Infinite to the finite by means of intermediary powers, from whence emerges the "second God," the Word, "the only Begotten Son of God" (*τρωῐογονον ὑιον*),—with him, perhaps unwittingly (for he never lost the thumb print of his rough modelers: Jehovah)—the Infinite of the East entered the Mediterranean world.

A hundred facts testify to what an extent the East was mingled with Hellenic thought during the second century of our era. Let us recall only three or four of the most characteristic! Plutarch quoted Zoroaster and devoted a whole treatise to Egyptian mythology. The historian, Eusebius, was a witness to the interest felt in his day in Asiatic philosophies and religions. One of the first build-

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orary Secretary, Dr. Kalidas Nag). Since November, 1926, it has published a regular Bulletin and the first number included an Essay by Dr. Kalidas Nag, containing a very interesting historical account of the spread of the Indian spirit beyond its own frontiers: *Greater India, a Study in Indian Internationalism.*

ers of Alexandrinism, Numenius, who extolled Pythagoras above all other Greeks, sought for the spirit of his age in the past, and believed that Pythagoras had spread in Greece the august wisdom of the Egyptians, the Magi, the Indians and the Jews.[5] Plotinus, a Greek of Egypt, departed with Gordian's army, in order to study Persian and Indian philosophy. And although Gordian's death, in Mesopotamia, stopped him half way, his intention shows his intellectual kinship with the Indian spirit.[6] But at the same time he was in communion with the Christians. One of his listeners, was a Doctor of the New Church, Origen; and they mutually respected each other. Plotinus was not merely a book philosopher. He was, at the same time, a saint and a great yogin. His pure image, that of Ramakrishna in certain characteristics,[7] deserves to be more piously remembered by both the East and the West.

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[5] Numenius, whose influence over Plotinus was of capital importance, "had directed all his efforts," says Eusebius, "towards a fusion of Pythagoras and Plato, while seeking for a confirmation of their philosophical doctrines in the religious dogmas of the Brahmins, the Indians, the Magi, and the Egyptians."

[6] His theory of reincarnation bears the stamp of Indian thought. All actions and thoughts count. The purified and detached are not reborn into the corporeal, they remain in the world of the mind and of bliss, without reason, remembrance or speech; their liberty is absolute; they are made one with the Perfect, and are absorbed into It without losing themselves in It. Such bliss can be obtained in the present by ecstasy.

His theory of matter and his definitions of it evoke the Hindu Maya.

His vision of the universe, as a divine Game, where "the actors constantly change their costumes," where social revolutions, the crash of Empires, are "changes of scene and character, the tears and cries of the actors" is the same as the Indian.

Above all his profound science of "deification," identification with God by the path of Negation is as I shall show, one of its most magnificent expressions and might have come from one of the great Indian yogins.

[7] His exquisite kindness and delicate, pure and rather childlike temperament.

It would be lacking in the respect his great work deserves, to summarise it here. But I must enumerate the most striking characteristics that are analogous to Indian thought.

Plotinus' First Being, who is "before all things" (πρὸ παντῶν) no less than in all that comes after him —is the Absolute. "Absolutely infinite, indeterminate, incomprehensible," he can only be defined by negation. "Let us take all things from Him, let us affirm nothing about Him, let us not lie by saying that there is anything in Him, but let Him simply be."

He is above good and ill, act and knowledge, being and essence. He has neither face nor form, neither movement nor number, neither virtue nor feeling. We cannot even say that He wishes or that He does. . . . "We say that He is not (ὃ μὴ ἔστιν): we cannot say what He is." . . . In brief Plotinus collects the whole litany of "Noes," so dear to the Indian mystic (and to the Christian), in order to express the Absolute. But without the self-satisfaction mingled with childish conceit that most men bring to it, Plotinus impregnates it always with his beautiful modesty, a fact that makes it very touching, and that I should say is more Christlike than many Christians (such as the author of *Mystic Theology,* which I shall examine later:)

"When we say," he wrote, "that He is above being, we do not say that He is this or that. We affirm nothing; we do not give him any name. . . . We do not try to understand Him: it would in fact be laughable to try to understand that incomprehensible nature. But we being men, with doubts like the sorrows of childhood, do not know what to call Him, and so we try to name the Ineffable. . . . He must have indulgence for our language. . . . Even the name of the One expresses no more than the negation of his plurality. . . . The problem must be given up, and research relapse into silence. What is the good of seeking when further progress is impossible? . . . . If we wish to speak of God, or to conceive Him, let us give up everything! (παντα ἆγες !) When this has been done, (let us not add anything to Him but) let us examine rather whether there is still not something to be given up! . . ."[8]

In the path of negation has India ever said anything more perfect or more humble?

Nevertheless, it is not a question of negation. This inconceivable Absolute is the supreme and superabundant Perfection, whose continual expansion engenders the universe. He is suspended to it by love and He fills it entirely: for, without ever coming out of Himself, He is present everywhere in His entirety. In the effort of the human spirit to distinguish the successive degrees of this divine procession of worlds, the mystic Greek in a splendid outburst of enlightened enthusiasm salutes Intelligence as the first born of God, the best after Him, (μεῖ άὐτό), itself "a great God" (εός ῖυς μέγας) "the second God" (εος ςεύερος), the first Hypostasis, which engenders the second, the Soul, the one and the multiple, the mother of all living things, There follows the unfolding of the whole world of the senses within the bounds whereof Matter is found, and matter is the last degree of being, or rather of non-being (μὴὄυ), the Infinite negative, the absolute and unattained limit at the opposite antipodes, of the thrust of Divine Power.

So, this Absolute, which our minds can only approach through negation, is affirmed in all that is. And It is in ourselves. It is the very basis of our being. And we can be rejoined to It by concentration. Yoga, the great path of divine union. as described by Plotinus, is a combination of jnana-yoga and bhakti-yoga. After a first and long stage of purification, the soul, as it enters the phase of contemplation, must renounce knowledge as a starting point. "The soul withdraws from the One, and is no longer one entity when it acquires knowledge. Knowledge in effect is a discourse (λὸγος), and a discourse is multiplicity (πολλὰ ϛὲ ὁ λογος). In order to contemplate the first Being a man must be raised above knowledge. (περἒπιστῖημην-----δραμεῖν)" [9]

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[8] *Enneades,* V, 5. 6.—VI. 9. 4.—VI. 8. 13.—etc.

Ecstasy begins. And the door of ecstasy for the Hellenic spirit, always tenacious of its rights, is Beauty. Through it the inflamed soul soars towards the light of the Good, above which there is nothing.

This description of ecstasy is like the descriptions [10] of both Hindus and Christians: for there is only one form of union with the Absolute, by whatever name the mind primarily or eventually seeks to clothe the Absolute. According to Plotinus, the Soul ought to empty itself of all form and content, of all evil and good, of all thought

[9] *Enn.* VI. 9. 4.—VI. 9. 10.

Cf. the analysis of intuitive thought by Ed. le Roy, quoted in Note I.

[10] This admirable conception drawn from the most sacred essence of the West with its passion for Beauty, has its source in our divine Plato:

"In the domain of love," said Socrates to the Stranger of Mantineus, "to do well one must pass from the love of a beautiful form to the love of all beautiful forms or to physical beauty in general; then from love of beautiful bodies to the love of beautiful souls, beautiful actions and beautiful thoughts. In this ascension of the spirit through moral beauty a marvellous beauty will suddenly appear to him, eternal, exempt from all generation, from all corruption, absolutely beautiful: not consisting either in a beautiful face, nor in any body nor in any thought nor in any science; not residing anywhere but in itself, whether in heaven, or on earth, but existing eternally in itself and for itself in its absolute and perfect unity." (Banquet: Summary.)

Therein is contained a yoga of Beauty where Bhakta to a certain extent is joined to Jnana. I do not say that it is peculiar to the West for we have traces of it in India, but it is the form natural and dear to us above all others.

of union with That which is neither form, nor content, nor evil, nor good nor thought.[11] It should even empty itself of the thought of God in order to become one with Him.[12] When it has reached this point He appears within it, He is it. "It has become God or rather it is God.[13] A centre which coincides with another centre. . . ." They are one. There is perfect identity. The soul has returned to itself. (οὐα ἐν ἆλλω οὖσσ ἐν ὀυδενιεόῦιν ἀλλε̈νηυῦῖη)[14]

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[11] Not to know but to be is also taught by the Vedanta:—"To know," said Vivekananda, "is to descend a step. We are It already. How then can we speak of knowing It?" *(Jnana-yoga: The Real and the Apparent Man).*

This is also the famous doctrine of the *Docta Ignorantia,* belonging to Christian mysticism: the knowledge above all knowledge. No man in the world has described it with such power and psychological detail as St. Jean-de-la-Croix in his famous treatise on the *Nuit Obscure*—the double Night: of the senses and of the spirit. "Primo derslinquare omnia sensibilia, secondo omnia intelligibilia . . ." St. Bonaventura had already said. *(Itinerarium mentis ad Deum).*

[12] The soul ought to be without form *(ἀνέιδεον),* if it wishes no obstacle to stop it from being filled and illuminated by the first Nature. (VI. 9. 7.) The first Principle, not having any difference in Him, is always present and we are ourselves present in Him, when we no longer possess anything. (VI. 9. 8.) The soul ought to drive out evil, good, and everything else to receive God only in itself. . . It will not even know that it has been joined to the first Principle (VI. 9. 7.) It is no longer soul, nor intelligence, nor movement . . . Resemblance *(ὁμοιοῦθα)* to God ought to be complete. The soul eventually does not even think of God because it no longer thinks . . . (VI. 7. 3. 5.) When the soul has become like Him, it sees Him appear all of a sudden; separation and duality are no more; both are one *(ἕν ἄυγω).* . . . This union is imitated on earth by those who love and are loved and who seek to become one flesh. (VI. 7. 34.)"

[13] *Θεὸυ γινόμενον μαλλον δε ὄνῖα* (VI. 9. 9.)

[14] Plotinus often experienced this great ecstasy, according to the definite testimony of Porphyry:

"To him the God appeared who had neither form nor face, who is above intelligence. I myself, Porphyry, once in my life approached Him and was united to Him. I was seventy-eight. This union formed the sum total of Plotinus' desires. He had

I have said enough to awaken in every Hindu reader the desire to know more of this great fellow yogin, who, in the last hour of Greece, in her majestic sunset, wedded Plato and India. In this divine marriage the male Hellenic genius, as he embraced the female Kirtana—the inspired Bacchante—imposed upon her mind an ordered beauty and intelligent harmony, resulting in one of the most beautiful strains of spiritual music. And the great

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this divine joy four times while I was staying with him. What then happened was ineffable."

So it is of the greatest interest to know from the mouth of Plotinus himself what were his impressions during the ecstatic state. The most striking is the anguish of the soul as it approached Divine Union; for it was unable to sustain the intensity long. "Certainly here below each time that the soul approaches That without form, it shrinks, it trembles at having before it only That which is nothing." *(μὴ ὸυδεν ἔνη)*

And these lines remind me of the mortal terror of young Vivekananda during his first visits to Ramakrishna, when the enlightened Master made him aware for the first time of the dizzy contact with the formless Absolute.

"The soul," continues Plotinus (and the rest of his description would serve for Vivekananda's experience) returns with joy . . . it lets itself fall until it meets some sensible object whereon to stop and rest . . . (VI. 9. 3. 9. 10.)

J. A. Symonds says the same thing: "Space, time, sensation were quickly blotted out step by step . . . The world lost all form and all content. But my ego remained in the terrible emptiness, feeling with anguish that reality would annihilate it like a soap-bubble. . . . The fear of the next dissolution, the frightful conviction that this moment was my last, that I had arrived at the edge of the abyss, at the certainty of eternal illusion, dragged me back from my dream. . . . The first sense that returned to me was that of touch. . . . I was happy to have escaped the abyss. . . ." (One of the many contemporary witnesses quoted by William James, in his chapter on Mysticism in *Religious Experience.*)

But a great mystic like Plotinus, had hardly set foot again on the earth than he longed for that from which he had fled. . . . The deadly vertigo did not cease to attract. The soul that has once tasted the terrible Union yearns to find it again, and it must return to the Infinite.

Christian mysticism of the first centuries was the first born of the union.

In the following pages I shall try to paint, however imperfectly, a portrait of the most beautiful type, in my opinion, of early Christian thought that issued from this marriage of East and West: Denis (Dionysius) the Areopagite.

* * *

I have often had occasion in the course of this book to notice analogies and even traces of kinship between the conceptions of Hindu and Christian mysticism at their highest moments. This likeness is the more striking as one approaches the source of Christianity;[15] and I want to demonstrate it to my Eastern readers. They will profit by it more than those of the West; for as I have already stated, they are all too ignorant of the marvellous treasures contained in the Christian metaphysics of Europe.[16]

The polemics that have been delivered round the name of the Areopagite—whether he be called Denis or Pseudo-

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[15] The blind fury of certain neophytes of modern literary Catholicism in the West in their denunciation of the danger of the East, is a fit subject for irony. They make it irrevocably the antithesis of the West, forgetting that the whole faith they proclaim comes to them from the East, and that in the ritual of the first centuries, as decreed by Denis the Areopagite, the West is represented by doctors of the faith, as "the region of shades" making the catechumen "hold up his hands as a sign of anathema" and "blow on Satan three times." (Cf. *Book of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. II. 2. 6.)

[16] The fault lies partly in the political conditions that interpose between India and Europe the thick screen of the British Empire—with its mind more tightly closed than any other in Europe to suggestions of Catholic (or even Pre-Reformation Christian) mysticism, as well as to music in the profound sense of the German masters, the other fountain of intuition.

Denis[17]—matter little to us here, for all accounts agree that his authentic writings fall within the period round about 532 or 533,[18] and that from that date their authority became law in the Christian Church and was invoked by Popes, Patriarchs and learned Doctors in the Synods and Councils of the VIIth and VIIIth centuries[19] down to the IXth century. They were then triumphantly installed in Paris by Charles the Bald, who had them translated by Scot Erigene—whence they impregnated the mystic thought of the Western Church. Their power is attested by St. Anselm, by St. Bonaventura, and by St. Thomas, who wrote commentaries upon them; the great doctors of the XIIIth century put them above the writings of the Church Fathers. In the XIVth century the mystic furnaces of Meister Eckhart, and still more those of Ruysbroeck were fed on their fires: again, at the time of the Italian Renaissance, they were the delectation of the great Christian Platonists, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola; and they continued to be the substance of our Berullians, our Salesians,[20] and the greatest mystics of the XVIIth century in France, as the recent works of the Abbé Brémond have shown.

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[17] For a thousand years this greatest master of Christian mysticism was supposed to be Denis the Anchorite, a member of the Athenian Areopagus at the time of St. Paul, was converted by him about 5 A. D., and later because Bishop of Athens: (he has even been identified with St. Denis of France). First Laurence Valla, then Erasmus, then the Reformation brutally wronging his legend, and being wickedly desirous of discrediting the work, which was sufficiently powerful to lose nothing by it, they changed the name of the author and tried to make him anonymous. Modern research seems to have agreed that the writer of these books lived about 500, and that at all events, although he may have been earlier than that date (according to the testimony of some of his learned disciples in the IXth century when they revived a controversy in existence about 400, on the subject of the authenticity of his writings) he cannot possibly have been later than Justinian, who quoted him as an authority. Cf. Stiglmayr: *Das Aufkommen der Pseudo-Dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindrungen in die christliche Literatur bis zum Lateran-concil* 649—Feldkirch, 1895.

Hugo Koch: *Pseudo-Dionysius Areop. in seinen Beziehungen zum Neo-Platonismus und Mysterienwesen,* 1900.

A French translation of the *Works of St. Denis the Areopagite,* by Mgr. Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, shot in the Commune of 1871, appeared in 1845, and was re-edited in 1887. For the benefit of my French readers I have used it in my quotations.

Alternative suggestion—Translator—

[An English translation of *The Works of St. Denis the Areopagite* is in existence by the Rev. John Parker (1897) and, wherever possible the translator has used it.]

[18] On the occasion of a religious conference summoned to Constantinople by Justinian. It is also noteworthy that the writings of Denis were invoked by the Severian heretics. A strong argument in their favour is that the orthodox from instincts of defence, or resentment made no attempt to throw doubt on their authenticity! And from that time onwards they were invoked and paraphrased until they almost became "holy oracles," to use the words of the sacred texts.

Hence, whatever the name of the architect, they form the monumental substructures of all Christian thought in the West during the ten most important centuries of its development. And they are more than that to the man who has eyes to see—they form one of the most harmonious cathedrals that has sprung from Christian thought and that still remains a living witness to it.

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[19] Here are some vital facts, showing their uncontested authority in the Christian Church, both Eastern and Western:—In the VIth century Denis was venerated by St. Gregory as *"antiquus videlicet et venerabilis Pater."* In the VIIth century Pope Martin I quoted him textually in the Lateran Council of 640, to prove Catholic dogma against heresy. His works were again used at the third Council of Constantinople, 692, and at the second Council of Nicea. In the VIIIth century the great Eastern Father, St. John the Damascene, "the St. Thomas of the Greeks of the Lower Empire" became his disciple. In 824 or 827 the Emperor of Constantinople, Michael the Lame, made a gift of his writing to Louis the Good. Scot Erigene who translated them for Charles the Bald, was entirely reborn by his spirit. He infused his own ardent breath into it and made it into a leaven of pantheistic mysticism for the West. Since then Denis has been associated with all mental contests.

[20] I would remind the reader that these names designate the French religious school of François de Sales, or Berulle, in the XVIIth century.

Its singular value is that it stands just at the junction of the East and the West, at the exact moment when their teachings were united.[21] Whether its architect has borrowed his art from Alexandrine masters or whether they borrowed it largely from him, the result is the same for us —a union of the highest Hellenic and the purest Christian thought—a marriage regularly consecrated in the eyes of the Church and acknowledged by her throughout the West.

Before tasting its fruits, I must remove from the minds of my readers the impression of discredit thrown over the old master in advance by the unfortunate word: *Pseudo,* which has in it the taint of falsehood. There is for instance, a beautiful picture called a "false Rembrandt" that is still scorned, because the idea of false implies imitation! But if it pleases an artist to hide his work under the name of somebody who never left any work behind him, is that any argument against his originality? At most the scheme might lead to a suspicion of the masked man's honesty. But this is less explicable after a study of Denis' works: for if there is one impression left by them it is that of the highest moral integrity; it is unthinkable that so lofty a mind could have stooped to subterfuge, even in the interest of his faith; and I prefer to think that after his death he was exploited by others. At all events and in spite of quite definite interpolations and retouches in the original text, the text still presents from end to end—both treatises and letters—a unity and harmony, that leave in the memory of those who have read them an indelible impression of the serene race of the old master, more vivid than that left by many living people.[22]

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[21] If the date, 500, generally accepted today, is taken as the central point of Denis' career, he must have seen the end of Alexandria (Proclus 410-185) and of the Neo-Platonic school of Athens in 529. He therefore in a sense closed the eyes of Greek Philosophy. It is certain at least that both arise from the common metaphysical depths, wherein the wealth of Platonism, early Christianity, and the ancient East were mingled, and that from this storehouse the first five centuries of our era drew with open hands. It was a period of universalism of thought. According to the tradition (based on one of his extant letters) Denis visited Egypt in his youth with a friend, Apollophanes, who followed the Sophist philosophy, and had remained a pagan. Apollophanes who never forgave him for his conversion to Christianity, and in this letter accuses him of "parricide," because, as Denis explains, "I lacked filial piety in using against the Greeks what I had learned from the Greeks." The affiliation of Greece and Christianity is here specifically acknowledged.

The keystone of the edifice—and the whole edifice itself—the *alpha* and *omega* of the work—is "Super-eminent Unity"—"Unity the mother of all other unity." And the grandeur of his definitions and negations which seek, less to attain than to invoke It [23] is equal and parallel to

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[22] It is to be regretted on behalf of Christianity that this work should be so difficult of access: for very few religious texts give a higher and at the same time more human, more compassionate or pure representation of Christian thought than these pages. In them no word of intolerance, animosity, and vain and bitter polemic, comes to destroy the beautiful concord of intelligence and goodness—whether he is explaining with affectionate and broad understanding the problem of evil, and embracing all, even the worst, in the rays of Divine Good,—or whether he is recalling a monk of malicious faith to meekness by telling him the admirable legend (which would have enchanted old Tolstoy) of Christ coming down again from heaven to defend a renegade about to die against one of his own sect, with this rebuke to the inhuman Christianity:—"Strike against Me in future, for I am ready, even again, to suffer for the salvation of men." (Letter VIII.)

[23] M. Ferdinand Morel in his *Essai sur l'introversion mystique* (1918) has submitted Denis the Areopagite to a psycho-analytical examination, and has picked out the words he uses most frequently ὑπερ (always applied to God) and αυτὸ. They might imply the double impetus of returning within the self and the expansion of the inner Being—(psycho-analysts would say: the projection of an

Vedantic language. . . . "Without reason, without understanding, without name. . . . Author of all things, nevertheless It is not because It surpasses all that is. . . ." [24] Itself not being the cause of being to all,[25] and that which is included in the same title as the Non-Being.

Everything is reduced to this unique object, which is at the same time the unique subject. It is an intoxication of unity,[26] wherein intelligence without ever losing its clarity gives itself to the torrential flood of immense Love and its "circular" river:

"Divine Love (which is the smooth flowing of the ineffable Unity) indicates distinctly its own unending and unbeginning, as it were, a sort of everlasting circle whirling round in unerring combination, by reason of the Good . . . and ever advancing and remaining and returning in the same and throughout the same." [27]

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introvert!). M. F. Morel further recognises the powerful activity expended in great intuition, and the acuteness of regard necessary to explore the subconscious world.

[24] *Book of Divine Names* I. I.

[25] *ibid.* Vol. I, p. 2, of the English translation by the Rev. John Parker, 1897 ed.

"The non-being, this transcendental appellation only belongs to that which exists in sovereign good in a super-eminent fashion . . . Since the latter (the Sovereign Good) surpasses infinitely the Being, it follows that in a certain way non-being finds a place in Him." (*ibid.* IV. V.)

[26] This intoxication discovers images of Unity to the spirit in all the words that invoke It. Hence the most daring etymologies: the sun, ἵλιος is Π πολλής, "He who collects and maintains Himself in unity," beauty, χαλὸς is χαλέω, "I call, I collect," etc. The spirit is truly haunted with unity.

[27] *ibid.* IV. 14.

This conception of the "ring of Love," going and coming, is preserved in the mystic theology of the XVIIth century, which Henri Brémond has analysed for us.

It is the double "Profession" of divine Persons of the Dominican Chardon—generation and grace. "The one is the eternal reason for the production of creatures and for their emergence from their cause. The other is the model of their return . . . And both

The whole world then is subject to divine gravitation, and the movement of all things is a march towards God. The sole aim of all conscious spirits is to "find their perfection in being carried to the Divine imitation . . . and, what is more Divine than all, in becoming a fellow-worker with God." [28]

And the "imitation" may be done in an infinite number of ways, for "each . . . find their perfection in being carried to the Divine imitation in their own proper degree;" [29] and he will become most like Him who "have participated in it, in many forms." [30]

But there are three principal ways of approach to Him. And each of the three may be followed in two ways, by *Affirmation* or by *Negation.*

The two affirmative ways are:

1. By a knowledge of the qualities and attributes of God, attained by the symbols of the Divine Names, which "the divine oracles" (that is to say, the Scriptures) have provided for our infirmity of spirit.

2. By the method of all that exists—the created worlds: for God is in all creatures, and the imprint of His seal may be found on all matter, although the mark of the seal varies according to the different kinds of matter.[31] All the worlds are united in one river. The laws of the physical

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together they form the circle of love, begun by God to come to us, begun by us to and in God. They are one production . . ." (*The Cross of Jesus,* 1647).

And the Bérullian, Claude Séquenot says the same (1634):—"We come out of God through the Creation, which is ascribed to the Father by the Son; we return to Him by grace which is attributed to the Holy Spirit."

[28] *Book of the Celestial Hierarchy,* III, 2—based upon St. Paul: I Corinthians. 3. 9.

[29] *The Celestial Hierarchy,* III. 2.

[30] *ibid.* IV. 1.

[31] "Even matter, inasmuch as it is matter, participates in the good" (*The Book of Divine Names,* II. 6. p. 214 of the French translation).

world correspond to the laws of the higher world.[32] It is then lawful to seek God under the veil of the most humble forms, for "all the streams of love—(even animal love; which therein finds its justification) [33] participate in holy Love, their unique source.

3. But all these means that we possess thanks to the tenderness of God, who proportions His light to the weak eyes of humanity and "places forms and shapes around the formless and shapeless" and under the manifold and the complex conceals Unity [34] are imperfect. And the other path, that of negation, is higher, and more worthy,[35] it is more certain, and goes further.

Few there are "even in the sacred ranks," who attain to the One, and yet some exist. "There are spirits among us called to a like grace, as far as it is possible for man. . . . They are those who, by the suspension of all intellectual operation enter into intimate union with the ineffable light. And they speak of God only through negations. . . ." [36]

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[32] *The Celestial Hierarchy,* XIII. 3.

[33] *The Divine Names:*—Extracts from pious hymns of the fortunate Hierotheus:—

"Love, whether we speak of Divine, or Angelic, or intelligent, or psychical, or physical, let us regard as a certain unifying and combining power . . . Collecting these again into one, let us say that it is a certain simplex power, which of itself moves to a sort of unifying combination from the Good, to the lowest of things existing, and from that again in due order, circling round again, through all the Good from itself, and through itself and by itself, and rolling back to itself always in the same way."

For Hierotheus, the master and friend of the Pseudo-Denis, cf. Langen: *Die Schule des Hierotheus,* 1893.

[34] *Divine Names,* I. 4.

[35] *The Celestial Hierarchy,* II. 3.

ibid. II. 5. "Divine things should be honoured by the true *negatives.*"

"The negatives respecting things Divine are true, but the affirmations are inharmonious."

[36] *Divine Names,* I. 5.

The great path of Negation is the object of a special treatise, famous from medieval to modern times: *The Treatise of Mystic Theology.*

Denis instructed an initiate, Timotheus, in it although he told him to keep the mysteries a strict secret—(for their knowledge is dangerous to unprepared minds). He taught him the entry into what he calls "Divine gloom," and which he explained in his letters [37] as "unapproachable light," and also into that "mystic ignorance," which being different from ordinary ignorance "in its superior sense, is a knowledge of Him, Who is above all known things."

Man must "abandon moderate negations for stronger and stronger ones. . . . And we may venture to deny everything about God in order to penetrate into this sublime ignorance," which is in verity sovereign knowledge. He uses the beautiful simile of the sculptor's chisel removing the covering of stone, and "bringing forth the inner form to view, freeing the hidden beauty by the sole process of curtailment." [38]

The first task is to tear aside the veil of "sensible things." [39]

The second task is to remove the last garments, the wrappings of "Intelligible things." [40]

The actual words deserve to be quoted:

"It is neither soul nor mind; nor has imagination, or opinion, or reason, or conception; neither is expressed nor conceived; neither is number nor order; nor greatness nor littleness; nor equality nor inequality; nor similarity nor dissimilarity; neither is standing, nor moving; nor at rest; neither has power, nor is power nor light;

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[37] Letter I to Gaius Therapeutes; Letter V to Deacon Dorotheus.

[38] *Mystic Theology,* II.

[39] *Mystic Theology,* IV. "That the pre-eminent Cause of every object of sensible perception is none of the objects of sensible perception."

[40] *ibid.* V. "That the pre-eminent Cause of every object of intelligible perception is none of the objects of intelligible perception."

neither lives nor is life; neither is essence nor eternity nor time; neither is Its touch intelligible, neither is It science nor truth; nor kingdom, nor wisdom; neither one nor oneness; neither Deity, nor Goodness; nor is it Spirit according to our understanding; nor Sonship nor Paternity; nor any other thing of those known to us, or to any other existing being; neither is It any of non-existing, nor existing things, nor do things existing know It, as It is; nor does It know existing things, *qua* existing; neither is there expression of It, nor name, nor knowledge; neither is It darkness nor light; nor error nor truth; neither is there any definition of all of It, nor any abstration. But when making the predications and abstractions of things after It, we neither predicate nor abstract from It; since the all-perfect and uniform Cause of all is both above every definition and the pre-eminence of Him, who is absolutely freed from all and beyond the whole, is also above every abstration." [41]

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[41] Cf. *"Deus propter excellentiam non immerito Nihil vocatur."* (Scot Erigene.)

"L'Amour Primordial n'est rien par rapport à autre chose." (Primordial Love is nothing in relation to anything else) (Jacob Boehme).

"Gott ist lauter Nichts, ihn ruhrt kein Nun nach Hier."

"God is mere nothing, to Him belongs neither Now nor Here." (Angelus Silesius.)

Negation is not more forcible emphasised in the famous verses of Sankara which Vivekananda recited to the dying Ramakrishna in the garden of Cossipore:

"I am neither spirit, nor intelligence, nor the ego, nor the substance of the spirit,
I am neither the senses . . . nor ether, nor the earth, fire nor air,
I am neither aversion, nor attachment, nor desire . . .
I am neither sin, nor virtue, nor pleasure, nor pain . . . etc.
I am Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Bliss.
I am He, I am He. . . ."

(Quoted by the *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1929.) I would go so far as to say that on this occasion Hindu thought is less daring than Christian thought, since after each strophe of negation it hastens to find foothold in "Existence, Knowledge and Bliss," even

Is there any religious Hindu who will not recognise in the intellectual intoxication of this total Negation, the Advaitic teachings of absolute Jnana-yoga, after it has arrived at the fact of realisation?

At this point in the conquest of the Divine, the achievement of the "Unreasonable, the cause of all reason,"[42] the liberated and enlightened soul enters into the Peace and Silence of Unity.[43] It does not see God, it does not know Him: "it rests there."[44] It is deified.[45] It no longer speaks of God: it *is* Himself:

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though it is absolute, and Christian mystics, the descendants of Denis, make a clean sweep of everything, blotting out even Existence and Essence from their conception of God.

[42] "Divine Wisdom, which his excellence renders unreasonable, is the cause of all reason." (*Divine Names,* VII.)

[43] Cf. in *Divine Names* the beautiful Chapter XI on the Divine Peace—that Divine Peace and Repose which the holy Justus calls unutterableness and immobility "marvellously active."

That is the theme of Denis, used again and again after him by all the great Christian mystics for ten centuries in their canticle of "Dark Silence," similarly Suso:

"Without knowing where, I enter into silence,
And I dwell in ignorance,
Above all knowledge . . .
A place without light, an effect without a cause . . ."

(Strophes of St. Jean-de-Croix on "obscure contemplation") "The silent desert of the Divinity . . . who is properly no being . . ." said Eckhart.

The French XVIIth century kept pure and unadulterated the great motif of the "darkness" and the "silence" of God, which it drew from the source of the Areopagite (often quoted); but it brought to the description of the Inner Voyage all the psychological resources of its race and time. There is nothing more astounding of its kind, except the *Dark Night of St. Jean-de-la-Croix*—than the pages of the Dominican Chardon (The Cross of Jesus 1647), quoted by Henri Brémond, in his *Metaphysique des Saints,* Volume II. p. 59-68.

[44] Letter to Dorotheus.

[45] (Preservation) cannot otherwise take place, except those who are being saved are being deified. Now the assimilation to, union with, God, as far as attainable, is deification.

(*Book of the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy,* I. 3.)

"But you will find that the Word of God calls gods, both the Heavenly Beings above us, and the most beloved of God, and holy men amongst us, although the Divine Hiddenness is transcendentally elevated, established above all, and created Being can properly and wholly be said to be like unto It, except those intellectual and rational Beings, who are entirely and wholly turned to Its Oneness, as far as possible, and who elevate themselves incessantly to its Divine illuminations, as far as attainable, by their imitation of God, if I may so speak, according to their power, and are deemed worthy of the same divine name." [46]

From that moment the "deified"—the saint, who is united to God, having drunk from the source of the Divine sun, becomes in his turn a sun to those below. "By ordinance, and for Divine imitation, the relatively superior (is source) for each after it, by the fact, that the Divine rays are poured through it to that." [47]

And gradually the light spreads through all the ranks of the double Hierarchy of the celestial and the human, in an unbroken chain linking the humblest to the highest. Moreover, this hierarchy is reflected in each individual. "Each heavenly and human mind has within itself its own special proof, and middle, and last ranks, and powers, manifested severally in due degree, for the aforesaid particular mythical meanings of the Hierachical illuminations . . . for there is nothing that is self-perfect—except the really Self-Perfect and pre-eminently Perfect." [48]

This perfecting is the object of initiation, whereby souls are made to pass through three stages: 1. Purification; 2. Illumination; 3. Consummation in the perfect knowledge of the splendours.[49]

To the first rank of the initiated belong those religious monastics, who, like the sannyasins of India, are under the vow of complete purification. They "remove their mind from the distraction of multiple things and precipitate themselves towards Divine unity and the perfection of holy love."[50] Their perfect philosophy "is trained to the knowledge of the commandments whose aim is the union of man and God."[51]

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[46] *The Celestial Hierarchy,* XII. 3. and XIII. 2.

[47] *ibid.* XIII. 3.

[48] *ibid.* X. 3.

[49] *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* VI. 3.

But it is not necessary to belong to a privileged order to attain this knowledge of the Divine Unity. For It is inscribed in each one. "The Divine Light is always unfolded beneficially to the intellectual visions;" even to those who reject it.[52] If it is not seen, it is because man cannot see it. And the proper business of initiation is to teach him to see it. "Inasmuch as the Divine Being is source of sacred order, within which the holy minds regulate themselves, he, who recurs to the proper view of Nature will see his proper self in what he was originally." He has only to contemplate himself with "unbiased eyes."[53] Purification, symbolised by ritual ablutions, does not only concern the body and the senses; but the spirit as well. The unalterable condition of realising communion (in the sense of the eucharistic sacrifice)[54] is to be "purified even to the remotest illusions of the soul."[55]

This word "illusions" used in such a sense is like an echo of the Hindu Maya.[56] I was often reminded of the latter when I was reading the long and beautiful explanation of Evil in the system of the Areopagite. Both use the same terms to deny both being and non-being:

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[50] *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* VI. 3.

[51] *ibid.* VI. III.

[52] *ibid.* II. third part, 3.

[53] *ibid.* II. third part, 4.

[54] Denis gives it the mysterious name of *Synaxe,* δυνκζις meaning the act of going back to unity through absolute concentration.

[55] *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* III. 10.

[56] But the reader, being informed to a certain extent of the trend of Hindu Vedantic thought, will have discovered resemblances at each step of my summary between the two mysticisms:—The path of Negation, the "deification" of individual souls, Christian sannyasins forcing themselves from multiplicity and the passionate return to unity, the science of divine unity, etc.

"Evil is non-existing;—if this be not the case, it is not altogether evil, nor non-existing, for the absolutely non-existing will be nothing, unless it should be spoken of as in the Good superessentially.[57]

"Evil has neither fixity, nor identity, it is varied, indefinite, as if floating in subjects that do not possess immutability in themselves . . . Evil, as evil, is not a reality. It is not a being. . . . Evil as evil is nowhere. . . ." [58]

Everything exists only of and through the Good, which is the "Super-eminent Unity."

At every moment there is the feeling that the links with the East are still intact, and it is difficult to disentangle them. When he describes the ceremonies to be rendered to the dead, Denis thinks of the "loud laugh" or disdainful smile of some profane persons when brought face to face with rites implying a belief that seems to them absurd. And he alludes to the opposite belief in Reincarnation. But he does not treat it with the pitying scorn that he expects from his own opponents. He says with admirable forbearance that in his opinion it is wrong:

"Some of them imagine that the souls depart into other bodies; but this seems to me unjust to the bodies who have shared the works of holy souls, since they are unworthily deprived of the divine rewards awaiting them at the end of the way. . . ." [59]

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The Areopagite uses many materials in his religious edifice that are to be found in the constructions of Indian thought. And if there is nothing to justify the view that the one has borrowed from the other, it must be granted that they both come from a common quarry. I have neither the means nor the desire to find out what it is. My knowledge of the human spirit leads me to discover it in the unity of thought and laws governing that spirit. The primordial instinct, the desire for mystic union with the Absolute that is embedded in each individual and that urges each man towards It, has very limited means of expression; and its great paths have been traced once and for all by the exigences and limitations of nature itself. Different races merely take with them over the same roads their different temperaments, habits and preferences.

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[57] *Divine Names,* IV. 19. p. 30 of the French translation.

[58] Evil, to Plotinus, is merely a lesser good. And absolute Evil, infinite Matter, symbolised the limit of the less good, the last stage of the *"Divine Procession."*

[59] *Divine Names,* VII. 1. 2.

In my opinion what distinguishes a Christian mystic imbued with the Hellenic spirit from the Indian Vedantist is as follows:

It is quite obvious that the former possesses a genius of imperial order, which demands good government. A harmonious and strict "Hierarchy" controls the whole edifice of the Areopagite. The associated elements cohere and are ordered with justice, prudence, and lucidity. And in that union each one keeps its own place and its own identity.[60] The vital instinct of the European is to cling to the smallest portions of his individuality and to desire to perpetuate them, and this instinct is curiously wedded to the elementary force of mystic gravitation which tends to lose the multiplicity of beings and forms in the incandescent gulf of Unity. "The Divine Peace" described by Denis in one of his most beautiful hymns,[61] is that perfect peace which ought to reign over the entire universe and in each individual, and which both unites and distinguishes all the elements that constitute the general harmony. It "reconciles" the diverse substances with each other and reunites them without altering them, so that in their alliance there is neither separation nor distance, but they keep the integrity of their own proper sphere and do not lose their own nature by an admixture of contrary elements; nothing disturbs either their unanimous concert or the purity of their own particular essence.[62]

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[60] This desire for order, and this majestic Hierarchy are directly inspired by *"the Divine Procession" (πρόεισιν)* of Plotinus.

"There is a procession between the first and the last; and in this procession each keeps his own proper place. The created being is subordinate to the creative being. Nevertheless it remains similar to the Principle to which it is attached—in so far as it is attached."

[61] *Divine Names,* XI.

This desire to safeguard the integrity and the continuance of individuals even in the bosom of the absolute Being is so powerful in Denis' case that he justifies not only natural inequality,[63] but (within Divine Peace itself) the fighting instinct that drives each individual to defend the preservation of its essence,[64] and even the cruelties of nature, so long as they correspond to the laws of types and elements.[65]

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[62] *ibid.* p. 260-261 of the French translation.

[63] He only condemns inequalities "resulting from a lack of proportion. For if by inequality we wish to imply the differences that characterise and distinguish living beings, we should say that it is divine justice that keeps them, to see that disorder and confusion are not re-established in the world." *(Divine Names)*

"Goethe's saying is surpassed. Denis does not love 'injustice' more than disorder":—disorder to him is the supreme injustice.

[64] It was observed to Denis that men and things do not seem to lend themselves to peace—that they "rejoice in diversity and division and would not be willingly in repose." He replied that if this implied that no being wished to lose his own nature, he saw even in this tendency a desire for peace. "For all things love to dwell at peace, and to be united amongst themselves, and to be unmoved and unfallen from themselves, and the things of themselves. And the perfect Peace seeks to guard the idiosyncrasy of each unmoved and unconfused, by its peace-giving forethought, preserving everything unmoved and unconfused, both as regards themselves and each other, and establishes all things by a stable and unswerving power towards their own peace and immobility. And if all things in motion desire, not repose, but ever to make known their own proper movement, even this is an aspiration after the Divine Peace of the whole, which preserves all things from falling away of their own accord, and guards the idiosyncracy and

Another dominant characteristic of Christian mysticism is the super-eminent place it gives to Goodness and Beauty. This comes from its double descent—noble on both sides—from Christ and Greece. The word Beauty appears in the very first words of Denis.[66] Beauty is the very quality of the Infinite. It is the source and the end of humanity.[67]

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moving life of all moving things unmoved and free from falling, so that the things moved, being at peace amongst themselves, and always in the same condition, perform their own proper functions."

(*Divine Names,* XL, 3 and 4, p. 262 of the French translation.)

Peace here denotes the Spinozan tendency to persevere in being, and cannot be described, any more than can Spinozan Peace, as *"belli privatio—sed virtus est quae ex animi fortitudine oritur."* (a translation of Spinoza's thought: "Peace is not lack of war, but an inner virtue, which has its source in the courage of the soul.")

I think that Vivekananda would have subscribed to this definition.

[65] Neither is the evil in irrational creatures, for if you should take away anger and lust and the other things which we speak of, and which are not absolutely evil in their own nature, the lion having lost his boldness and fierceness will not be a lion . . . So the fact that nature is not destroyed is not an evil, but a destruction of nature, weakness and failure of the natural habitudes and energies and powers.

"And if all things through generation in time have their perfection, the imperfect is not altogether contrary to universal nature."

(*Divine Names.* LV. XXV. pp. 64-65 of the English translation.)

[66] "All things are very beautiful. . . ."

"Nothing that exists is radically devoid of all beauty."

"Matter . . . having had its beginning from the Essentially Beautiful, has throughout the whole range of matter some echoes of the intellectual comeliness."

(*Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy.* II. 3 and 4.)

[67] "The Beautiful is the origin of all things, as a creating cause, both by moving the whole, and holding it together by the love of its own peculiar Beauty; and end of all things, and beloved as

And Goodness to a still higher degree. It is the very source of Being. It is the Divine Origin. The Areopagite puts it in the place of the Gaurisankar of the Divine Himalayas, at the zenith of the Attributes of God. It is the sun, but infinitely more powerful.[68] From it issues everything else that is: light, intelligence, love, union, order, harmony, eternal life. Even Being, "the first of all the gifts of God," is the offspring of Goodness. It is the first-born.[69]

This point of view is apparently very different from Hindu Mysticism, where the Absolute reigns supreme above good and evil. But it communicates to the Areopagite's whole thought a serenity, a tranquil and certain joy, without any of the tragic shades of a Vivekananda.[70]

But we must not deceive ourselves: the word Goodness in the mouth of Denis has little in common with Christian sentimentalism. Neither "Divine Peace," nor Divine Goodness, passes over in its scheme of things the mass of weakness, violence and suffering in the universe: they all go to make up its symphony; and each dissonance, if it is in the right place, adds to the richness of the harmony. It does not even forbid the chastisement of error, if that error violates the laws inherent in human

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final Cause (for all things exist for the sake of the Beautiful) and exemplary (Cause), because all things are determined according to It . . . Yea, reason will dare to say even this, that even the non-existing participates in the Beautiful and Good."

(*Divine Names,* IV. 7.)

All this part of the chapter is a hymn to Beauty.

[68] *ibid.* the whole of Chapter IV.

[69] *ibid.* V. 5 and 6. "Absolute and infinite goodness produces the being as its first good action."

[70] And I recall that even Ramakrishna, who lived in a continual state of bliss, loving Maya as a son, was not blind to the tragic face of the universe, and showed on occasions the stupidity of characterising God as good. He did not deny the apparent cruelty of nature, but he forbade any judgment of the divine will directing it; and his piety bowed down before the inscrutable decrees of the infinite Force.

nature; for nature has endowed every man with liberty; "and it is not a function of Providence to destroy nature."[71] On the contrary it must "watch" that the integrity of each individual nature is maintained, and with it the integrity of the whole universe and of each of its parts. And that is what is meant by "universal salvation."[72]

It is clear that all these different terms: Providence, Salvation, Goodness and Peace express no shallow optimism. Their conception arises from an uncompromising and disillusioned view of nature. They demand an intrepidity of heart and mind,[73] not far removed from the heroism of Vivekananda, but better able to maintain the unshakable serenity of a great soul that is one with the Sovereign Unity and wedded to its eternal designs.

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[71] "We will not admit the vain statement of the multitude, that Providence ought to lead us to virtue even against our will. For to destroy nature is not a function of Providence. Hence, as Providence is conservative of the nature of each, it provides for the free, as free; and for the whole and individual, according to the wants of all and each . . . distributed proportionally to each." (*Divine Names,* IV. 33.)

Even Plotinus' conception of Liberty has traces of it; for he reproved Stoic fatalism. Man is the master of his actions. "Liberty is included in the plan of the universe from all eternity." (*Enn.* III, 3. 7. I. 255.)

[72] "Divine Justice is also called 'the Universal Safety' because it protects and preserves all beings just as they exist and just as they are ranked." (*Divine Names* VIII, 9.)

[73] *ibid.* VIII. 8.—compare his quiet reply to those who were astonished and grumbled that "good people are abandoned without redress to the vexations of the wicked." It was one of two things, he said, either that so-called good people set their affections upon worldly things, which were torn from them; and therefore they were "entirely cut off" from the quality they had usurped and from Divine Love. Or else they really loved eternal things and then they ought to rejoice in all the tribulations whereby they were made worthy to enjoy them.

I have already quoted his conception of Christ as the "chief of the athletes," leading his band into the lists "to fight for liberty." (*The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* II, 3rd. Part 6). I have compared this passage to words of Vivekananda.

The atmosphere in which Denis' ideas are steeped is less moral, in the ordinary sense, than cosmic, and its temperature is closer to that of Indian Mysticism than to simple Christian thought, which rallies round the Crucified nameless multitudes of the humble and oppressed. The energies are maintained by the impersonal command of nature's laws, which combine and unite the elements in all their multiplicity. But the order of the Areopagite has this advantage over the Indian, that it partakes of the harmony of Greek reason and the Roman genius of imperial organisation. Denis, so we feel strongly, is obliged to satisfy the double exigencies of the Hellenic mind, nourished on Eastern thought, and the evangelistic heart filled with the dream of the crucified Saviour. He has encircled the Christ with a rich halo of Alexandrine speculation, and as a result the fascination of the halo has in a measure eclipsed the Christ. The first who approached its circle of light, like John Scot Erigene, was blinded by it. He was the only man of his century to come into contact with them, and to live in long and secret communion with this mysterious work; for he was almost the only living man of his age who understood the language in which it was written. He drank of the mystic draught, and from it he imbibed the secret, so dangerous to orthodoxy, of the freedom of the mind intoxicated by symbols, wherein the letter of the Christian faith is little by little drowned in the limitless and unfathomable ocean of the One. By way of Denis, Plotinus, Philo, the Infinite of Asia filtered through him into the religious soul of the West. The Church condemned him in vain during the XIIIth century. He flourished openly in the enchanted philter of the great mystics of the XIVth century—the most intoxicated of them, Meister Eckhart, being condemned by the Avignon Papacy.

That is why it is easy to understand the caution wherewith the Church today conceals even while it honours "the Pseudo-Denis"—that old, equivocal, obscure, uncertain and dangerous master, as he was called by the French historian best qualified to write of Western mysticism.[74] Nobody can deny that the judgment was correct from the orthodox point of view—although ten centuries of orthodoxy had been nourished upon Denis; and were none the worse for it! But we, who do not trouble about orthodoxy, who are only guided by the attraction of the great sources of intelligence and a common love of humanity, have rejoiced to discover and to show in the work of the Areopagite—(to use again Ramakrishna's ingenious parable)—one of the flights of steps leading to the reservoir with several ghats.[75] There from one of the ghats, Hindus fetch the water they call Brahman. And from another Christians draw the water they call Christ. But it is always the same water.

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To sum up: the following in my opinion are the three chief lessons that Hindu religious thought should be interested to learn, and to take from European mysticism:

1. The architectural sense of Christian metaphysicians. I have just described it in the work of Denis; and his sovereign art is to be found throughout the Middle Ages. The men who raised the cathedrals, carried into the construction of the mind the same genius of intelligent order

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[74] Henri Brémond; *Historie littéraire du sentiment religieux en France,* VII. *La Metaphisique des Saints,* Vol. I. p. 158.

[75] And in the West on the other side of the Atlantic, Emerson's voice was an echo of Ramakrishna's:

"All beings proceed from the same spirit, which bears different names, love, justice or wisdom, in its different manifestations, just as the Ocean receives other names when it bathes other shores." (Lecture at Harvard, 1838.)

and harmonious balance that made them the master builders of the arches linking the Infinite to the Finite.[76]

2. The psychological science of the Christian explorers of the "Dark Night" of the Infinite. In it they expended a genius, at least equal—(sometimes superior)—to that which has since been diverted into profane literature through the theatre and the novel. The psychology of the mystic masters of the XVIth century in Spain and the XVIIth century in France foreshadowed that of the classical poets; and modern thinkers who imagine that they have discovered the Subconscious have scarcely reached the same level. It goes without saying that their interpretations differ. But the essential point is not the interpretation, the name given by the mind to what it sees—but *what it sees*. The eyes of Western mysticism reached to the limits of the inaccessible.

3. The formidable energies that Western mysticism uses to achieve Divine Union, in particular the passionate violence of the European accustomed to battle and action. It devoured Ruysbroeck, so that his Bhakti (Love) sometimes took on the guise of the Seven Deadly Sins: "Implacable Desire," the fury of mortal "Combat," the "torrent of delights," the embrace of carnal possession,[77] and

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[76] In this they differ from intellectual logicians who strive to separate the mind into compartments. And the difference between St. Jean-de-la-Croix and Calvin, who were almost contemporary, has often been remarked: the latter sacrificed the finite to the infinite, the former established at the same time the difference and the connection between the two conceptions.

[77] See, in the magnificent French translation by Ernest Hello, (new edition Perrin, 1912), Extracts from *De ornatu spiritalium nuptiarum* ("concerning insatiable hunger," p. 38-9;—"The combat" between the spirit of God and the soul, a description of unheard of brutality and crudity, p. 40-41; or again "The Meeting on the Mountain," p. 54-55; and "the Embrace," p. 71 *et seq.*) and from *De Septem Custodiis Libellus* (the description of the "tempest of love," p. 106-111). A French reader who had been forewarned would have little difficulty in recognising in this burning torrent the reflected face of more than one illustrious Catholic poet like Claudel, who has borrowed from it.

the colossal hunger of the Epicurian. Similarly the *"irascibilis"* of Eckhart whose Soul being identical with God's, "cannot bear anything above it even God Himself," and so seizes Him by force.[78]

In these three directions I believe that Indian Mysticism might find sources of enrichment.[79] And, I believe

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[78] Eckhart's third proposition was condemned by a Papal Bull. It declared that "man with God has created the heaven and the earth" and that "God can do nothing without man." In a sermon he enumerated the three highest virtues, ascribing "irascibilis" to the second place under the definition of "Violent upward aspiration." And he added that the lack of it was a sin; *"Die Seele kann nichts erttragen dass irgend etwas über ihr sei. Ich glaube, sie kann nicht einmal das ertragen dass Gott über ihr sei."* Thanks to this power, he says, God is seized (ergreifen) by the soul."

(p. 236-237 of the edition of Insel-Verlag, Leipzig: *Meister Eckhart Deutsche Predigten und Traktate,* 1927.)

[79] We do not claim as do so many Western thinkers—in particular M. Rudolf Otto, in his fine study of *Fichte and the Advaita* (published in *West-Ostliche Mystik,* 1926) that the superiority of Western Mysticism is in "Lebendige Tätigkeit," in its character of action coupled to divine contemplation. What is the Gita but a heroic exaltation of action?

. . . "It is not enough to abstain from action to free oneself from the act. . . . Activity is superior to inaction. . . . The former carries a man away, who controls his senses by the spirit, and fully detached, imposes on them disciplined effort. . . . There is not, O son of Pritha, in the three worlds anything that I am bound to do, nothing in which I am lacking, nothing which I have to acquire, and nevertheless I dwell in action. The worlds would cease to exist, if I did not accomplish my work; I would be the cause of universal confusion and of the end of all creatures. The ignorant work through attachment to the act while the wise also work but without attachment and simply for the good of the worlds! . . ."

These famous words which have for so many centuries nourished Indian thought, are still a breviary of action and of inspiration to Gandhi and Aurobindo Ghose, as they were to Vivekananda. Aurobindo shows in the God of the Gita not only the God who is unveiled through the consiousness of the spirit, but the God who moves to action, to all our struggles, all our progress, the supreme Master of work and sacrifice, the friend of the people who toil and struggle—our Denis the Areopagite would say: "the further, that it is part of Vivekananda's own spirit to point them out to it. His great Advaitism was continually preoccupied in enlarging and completing his conception of Unity. He sought to annex all the energies that other races and other religions had used in the service of this heroic conquest. And his faith in the "God-Man" was so disinterested that, in order to serve it, he lowered his high Indian pride and his ardent patriotism before any people, whoever they might be, if they seemed to him to be striving more effectively for the common cause. Without really realising the depths hidden in the mystic soul of the West, he had an intuition that the East might find abundant spiritual resources in the West, so that together they might realise complete Advaitism—that is to say the religious Unity of the whole human family.[80]

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chief of the athletes in the lists." (Cf. *Essays on the Gita*, 2 Vols. 1921-1928, Calcutta.)

[80] From a letter of Vivekananda to an Englishman, August 9, 1895, recently published by the Prabuddha Bharata, February, 1929, I extract the following, (freely condensed):

". . . I believe firmly that there are periodic fermentations of religion in human society and that it is at present traversing one of those periods. . . . The religious fermentation spreading at present has this characteristic, that all the small eddies of thought are flowing to one single end: the vision and the search for the Unity of the Being. . . . In India, in America, in England (the only countries that I know), hundreds of these movements are striving with each other. All represent more or less consciously or unconsciously Advaitic thought, the most noble philosophy of Unity that man has ever had. . . . Further, if anything is clear to me, it is that one of these movements ought to absorb all the rest. . . . Which should it be? . . . The group that shows the most intense and marked character of life. . . . One word, on this subject! Yes, in truth, I love India. But each day my vision becomes clearer, and whether India or America or England, we are all the servants of that God, who by the ignorant is called Man. He who waters the roots does he not also water the whole tree? There is only one basis for social, political or religious welfare: it is to know that I and my brother are ONE. This is true for all countries and for all men. And let me tell you that

It is then under his aegis that I present to India this short summary of Christian Advaitism, from its Attic cradle in Alexandria. Over that cradle, as over the manger, the Star of the East came to rest.

April 1929.

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the Westerners realise this better than the Easterners, who almost exhaust themselves in formulating the idea and carrying it out in a few individual cases. Let us work then without desire for name or fame or domination over others! . . ."

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